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BY

T. N. TALFOURD.

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"I left no calling for this idle trade,
No duty broke."—POPE.

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PREFACE

TO THE PRESENT EDITION.

In publishing the following Dramas in a cheap and compact form, I have little to express except my thanks for the indulgence which has been extended towards them. If I had felt at liberty to alter them, I should have been tempted to do more than correct some verbal errors, and curtail a few palpable redundancies of language; but I feel that when a work has been once fairly presented to the public, and, to the full extent of the author's hopes, accepted, he is no longer at liberty to treat it as exclusively his own; and, therefore, I have confined my own corrections within the narrow limit I have suggested. In addition to the few sonnets which accompanied the former editions, I have collected a few more which have appeared in periodical works, and added some verses which have not been before printed.

Here I might close this preface—as the slender matters which have reference to each Drama have been noticed in the Advertisement prefixed to each—if I did not think that I ought not to allow the present occasion to pass without noticing a misconception of the author of "The Hungarian Daughter," which, although not perhaps calling for a separate protest, and certainly not justifying any hostile remark, should not pass unnoticed in a collected edition which includes the passage on which it is founded.

Mr. Stephens—an author endowed with real tragic power, though not perhaps always adapting it to the purposes of theatrical representation—sharing with other Dramatic Poets the strong and natural desire of seeing works designed for the stage presented upon it—seems to have divided the plays of the present day into two classes, "*the acted*" and the "*unacted*," as if the distinction implied some essential difference in merit or kind, and not a mere difference of fortune; and to have sought for the latter a great pre-eminence in critical opinion over the former. To the

enunciation of this opinion, or to its maintenance by a comparison of my own dramas with tragedies which have not been acted, however much to my disadvantage, I have no right to object;—but I do object to being elevated into a position of authority to which I have no claim, and then regarded as expressing an opinion on the works *of others* which it would have been impertinent in me to offer. The passage is as follows:—"Were I to affirm that, in my opinion, the unacted drama of this country at the present day is of a higher order than that which finds its way unto the stage, such a declaration would be very likely ascribed to prejudice, but Mr. Serjeant Talfourd *has most handsomely proclaimed the same truth;* and from his competence, in every point of view, to set the question at rest, I should presume there can be no appeal."* The reference intended is, I presume, to the advertisement prefixed to the second edition of "Glencoe,"† which had been published shortly before the appearance of "The Hungarian Daughter," as I am unconscious of having written anything else which bears on the subject. Having seen the production and the success of "Ion" and "The Athenian Captive" attributed to personal circumstances, I was desirous of stating that "Glencoe" had been accepted as the work of a stranger by the manager and actors, and had passed the ordeal of its first representation before the disclosure of the author's name; and in making this statement I expressed the reason for intruding personal matters on the public as follows:—

"As I am conscious that this Play has been produced at a time when Dramatic productions, superior to it in many of the essentials of the species of composition, have recently issued from the press, I think it due to the management of the Haymarket Theatre and to Mr. Macready to state the exact truth respecting it." It is true that I intended to express my conviction that this particular work—while I might depreciate without offence—was inferior in many respects to Plays not then acted, as (among others) to Mr. Horne's "Cosmo de Medici"—to Mr. Stephens' own dramas—and to "Athelwold," "Nina Sforza," and "The Blot on the 'Scutcheon," which have since been represented, but I did not presume to apply the same comparison to other authors of acted Plays—as Knowles, Bulwer, Jerrold, or the author of "The Provost of Bruges." It may be permitted to writers who, like Mr. Stephens, are conscious of power which has not obtained the

* Preface to the "Hungarian Daughter," p. 19. † Post, p. 186.

fair opportunity of trial before living audiences, to console themselves by the expression of their belief that, "*with the exception of a few modern tragedies which cannot get represented,* the hundred and eighty years since the adoption of the odious monopoly has not produced a single Play that will live at the present century;"* but it would ill become one whose dramatic efforts have obtained their full measure of attention, to sit thus in judgment on those of his contemporaries who have not only attained splendid theatrical success, but high and lasting renown. I may be allowed to add that, while I am not only content but happy to attribute much of the success of the two first Dramas to personal regards, I feel that it was an honest success; for, believing that the liberal issue of orders has conduced greatly to impair the love for the Drama, and to impoverish the managers of theatres, I have always declined to solicit or use them; and have never obtained, or written, or given one on any representation of either of my Plays.

In the Preface to "Glencoe," which was no doubt imperfectly recollected by Mr. Stephens, when he invested me with so unmerited an authority, I expressed my concurrence in the demand which he and other Dramatists made for the removal of all legislative restrictions on the performance of Plays, and my hope that it might produce the consequence they expected, in greatly facilitating the representation of new Dramas. While I acquiesced in the justice of this claim, I cherished no sanguine hope that its success would produce the expected results; because I knew that there was a monopoly, not of the Law's making, and beyond the Law's redress—a monopoly of the power of representing tragic passion and suffering, limited to a very few artists, which no legislation can remedy.

The demands of Dramatists has been granted—the legal monopoly is entirely overthrown; every theatre within the Bills of Mortality may obtain the right of representing the legitimate drama; but what is the result? Alas! it has only been the annihilating the distinction between the two classes of Dramatists, for the benefit of neither; for all our Drama is *unacted* now? And thus it must continue, until this art of acting shall revive, and the Dramatist shall possess not only a right to a "free stage," but obtain actors to render it vital.

In the meantime I rejoice in the conviction that the genius of

* Preface to "The Hungarian Daughter," page 21.

our country has assumed a dramatic form, and has been developed in tragedies of a high order; some of which have been acted; others are incapable of being acted; and others shall be acted, when actors of true passion shall be found, but not with real success till then. Excluding from consideration the noble dramatic poems of Taylor and Darley, which are written in express repudiation of an actual stage, and those of Smith, Troughton, and Marston, which have been embodied upon it, there remain noble tragedies in print which would do honour to the stage, and which yet I should regret to see acted in a small sphere, with poor accompaniments, and by frigid, illiterate, or ungraceful performers. I would not—to cite one of the noblest instances which our Drama presents—desire to see "Cosmo de Medici," with its images of gay and princely life, and of colossal sorrow, disfigured by the vapid imbecility of its youths and the mouthing inanity of its great and mournful father. Whether the impulse given to dramatic poetry will long survive the annihilation of the stage, I fear to conjecture; and I am not sanguine for the cause of Dramatic Authors, unless a race of actors shall arise to help them. Mr. Horne has already turned to the Epic, and consoled us by the noble music and classic imagery, and intense feeling, and starry destiny of his "Orion," for the absence of a presentment of dramatic passion and suffering. If the Stage, in spite of its emancipation, shall fall to decay, I shall deplore it—if it be only for what we shall lose in him, and in the younger genius of Robert Browning—a genius only yet dimly perceived, but deeply felt, and which requires and deserves the noble discipline of dramatic conditions. Happy, indeed, shall I be to find the hopes and the struggles of those who have achieved the emancipation of the Stage not lost in the destruction of that for the freedom of which they have fought and conquered!

T. N. T.

LONDON, JANUARY 12, 1844.

CONTENTS.

PAGE

NOTICE OF THE LATE DR. VALPY, PREFIXED TO "ION" 13

PREFACE TO "ION" 17

ION—A TRAGEDY 29

DEDICATION OF "THE ATHENIAN CAPTIVE" . . 102

PREFACE TO "THE ATHENIAN CAPTIVE" . . . 103

THE ATHENIAN CAPTIVE—A TRAGEDY 107

DEDICATION OF "GLENCOE" 164

ADVERTISEMENT TO "GLENCOE" 165

PREFACE TO "GLENCOE" 169

GLENCOE—A TRAGEDY 175

SONNETS:

1. EVENING SERVICE AT READING SCHOOL . . . 235
2. THE FORBURY AT READING 236
3. ON HEARING THE SHOUTS OF THE PEOPLE AT THE READING ELECTION, 1826, AT A DISTANCE . . 237
4. VIEW OF THE VALLEY OF READING, FROM TILEHURST, AT THE CLOSE OF THE ELECTION, 1826 . . 238
5. TO THE THAMES AT WESTMINSTER . . . 239
6. TO THE SAME RIVER 240
7. TO MR MACREADY, ON HIS PERFORMANCE OF "WERNER" 241
8. FAME—THE SYMBOL AND TYPE OF IMMORTALITY . 242
9. TO MR. MACREADY, ON THE BIRTH OF HIS FIRST CHILD. 243
10. TO CHARLES DICKENS, ON "OLIVER TWIST" . 244

PAGE

SONNETS:

11. To Miss Adelaide Kemble, when about to retire from the Stage 245
12. On the Reception of Wordsworth at Oxford . 246
13. The Memory of the Poets 247
14. Eton College surveyed after leaving a Son at School for the first time 248

Alum Bay, Isle of Wight—Lines written at the Needles Hotel 249

Verses in Memory of a Child named after Charles Lamb. 254

APPENDIX:

Note to the "Athenian Captive" 259
Notes to "Glencoe" 263

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

ADRASTUS, King of Argos.

MEDON, High Priest of the Temple of Apollo.

CRYTHES, Captain of the Royal Guard.

PHOCION, son of MEDON.

CTESIPHON, CASSANDER, } noble Argive youths.

ION

AGENOR, CLEON, TIMOCLES, } sages of Argos.

IRUS, a boy, slave to AGENOR.

CLEMANTHE, daughter of MEDON.

HABRA, attendant on CLEMANTHE.

SCENE—*Argos.*

THE TIME of the Action is comprised in one day and night, and the following morning.

NOTICE OF THE LATE DR. VALPY,

PREFIXED INSTEAD OF DEDICATION TO THE FIRST PUBLISHED EDITION OF ION.

In offering this attempt at dramatic composition to the public at large, I am mournfully reminded of an irreparable loss by the necessity of omitting a Dedication to one whose name should have graced its opening page. The two Editions which have been privately circulated were inscribed to my venerable and indulgent friend, Dr. VALPY, upon whose long life of kindness Death has since set the final seal. When I ventured to claim for it his protection, I well knew that I might rely upon that charity which lavished its bounties upon every effort of his pupils, for tenderness to its faults, and for generous praise of any merits which the eye of friendship might detect or create. There was also a propriety in seeking this association for a work which was prompted by love of those remains of antique beauty which he had taught me to know and to revere; which assumed that form of poetry in which he had chiefly delighted; and which, although meditated in broken hours, and at long intervals, had always mingled with the recollections of those happy days, when he first awakened within me the sense of classical grace, and of those after-seasons, when the exquisite representations of Greek Tragedy, which he superintended, made its images vital. He is gone to his rest full of years and honours; and I cannot receive from him that sanction which he cordially gave me when I presented this drama to my friends, now that I submit it to the judgment of a wider and an impartial circle. Death, which harmonizes the pictures of human character, found little in *his* to spiritualize or to soften; but if it has not enhanced the feeling of his excellencies in the minds of those who felt their influence, it has enabled them to express that *feeling* without the semblance of flattery.

It has left them free not only to expatiate on those well-directed labours which have facilitated the access of the young to the elements of sound learning; on the solemn and persuasive tone of his pulpit eloquence; on the steadiness of his attachment to principles adopted with caution, expressed with moderation, yet maintained without a sigh at the cost of the emoluments and honours to which they were obstacles; but also to revert to that remarkable kindness of disposition which was the secret but active law of his moral being. His nature was not ameliorated nor even characterized, but wholly moulded of Christian love to an entireness of which there are few examples. He had no sense of injury, but as something to be forgiven. The liberal allowance which he extended to all human frailties grew more active when they affected his own interests, and interfered with his own hopes; so that, however he might reprobate evil at a distance, as soon as it came within his sphere he desired only to overcome it by good. Envy, Hatred, and Malice, were to him mere names, like the figures of a speech in a schoolboy's theme, or the giants in a fairy tale—phantoms which scarcely touched him with a transient sense of reality. His guileless simplicity of heart was not preserved in learned seclusion, or by a constant watchfulness over the development of youthful powers, (for he found time to mingle frequently in the blameless gaieties and the stirring business of life,) but by the happy constitution of his own nature, which passion could rarely disturb, and evil had no power to stain. His system of education was animated by a portion of his own spirit: it was framed to enkindle and to quicken the best affections, and to render emulation itself subservient to the generous friendships which it promoted. His charity in its comprehensiveness, resembled nothing less than the imagination of the greatest of our poets, embracing everything human; shedding its light upon the just and the unjust; detecting "the soul of goodness in things evil;" stealing rigidity from virtue; bringing into gentle relief those truths which are of aspect the most benign, and those suggestions and hopes which are most full of consolation; and attaching itself, in all the various departments of life, to individuals whose childhood it had fostered; in whose merits its own images were multiplied, or whose errors and sorrows supplied the materials of its most quick and genial action. The hold which the Reading school-boy had upon this charity could not be forfeited, even "by slights, the worst of injuries;" and when broken in fortune,

deserted by relatives, and frowned on by the world, he had only to seek the hospitable roof of his old master—"claim kindred there, and have his claims allow'd." By the spirit of cordiality which breathed there, all party differences were melted away, or, if perceived at all, served only to render tolerance more vivid; and when he who had presided there for fifty years left the scene of his generous labours as a permanent abode, it was to diffuse the serenity of a good conscience and the warmth of unchilled affections through the homes of children who were made proud as well as happy by his presence. Such was he to the last, amidst the infirmities which accidents rather than age had accumulated around him;—the gentlest of monitors, and the most considerate of sufferers—until he was withdrawn from those whose minds he had nurtured; one of whom, who has most cause for gratitude, pays this humble tribute to his memory.

LONDON, 26th *May*, 1836.

PREFACE

TO THE FOURTH PUBLISHED EDITION OF ION.

THE following Drama, as the readers of two Editions which were printed for private circulation are already aware, was composed and printed without any hope of its being found capable of representation on the stage. Its publication in its present form was contemporary with its production on the night of Mr. Macready's benefit, 26th of May, 1836; and as, at that time, its repetition was not anticipated, it was thought unnecessary to accompany it with any Preface. But as its performance has since been attended with unexpected success both in this country and in America, I may, without impropriety, state the views with which it was written, and indulge myself in the expression of my gratitude to those by whose assistance it has thus far been rendered vital. The first of those purposes will be best accomplished by extracting a portion of the Preface to the earliest of the unpublished Editions, which bears date in April, 1835:—

"The title of this Drama is borrowed from the Tragedy of Euripides, which gave the first hint of the situation in which its hero is introduced—that of a foundling youth educated in a temple, and assisting in its services; but otherwise there is no resemblance between this imperfect sketch and that exquisite picture. It has been written, not indeed without a view to an ideal stage, which should never be absent from the mind of the humblest aspirant to dramatic composition, but without any hope of rendering it worthy to be acted. If it were regarded as a drama composed for actual representation, I am well aware that not in 'matter of form,' only, but in 'matter of substance,' it would be found wanting. The idea of the principal character,—that of a nature essentially pure and disinterested, deriving its strength entirely from goodness and thought, not overcoming evil by the force of will, but escaping it by an insensibility *to its approach*,—vividly conscious of exist-

ence and its pleasures, yet willing to lay them down at the call of duty,—is scarcely capable of being rendered sufficiently striking in itself, or of being subjected to such agitations, as tragedy requires in the fortunes of its heroes. It was further necessary, in order to involve such a character in circumstances which might excite terror or grief or joy, to introduce other machinery than that of passions working naturally within, or events arising from ordinary and probable motives without; as its own elements would not supply the contests of tragic emotion, nor would its sufferings, however accumulated, present a varied or impressive picture. Recourse has therefore been had, not only to the old Grecian notion of Destiny, apart from all moral agencies, and to a prophecy indicating its purport in reference to the individuals involved in its chain, but to the idea of *fascination*, as an engine by which Fate may work its purposes on the innocent mind, and force it into terrible action most uncongenial to itself, but necessary to the issue. Either perhaps of these aids might have been permitted, if used in accordance with the entire spirit of the piece; but the employment of *both* could not be justified in a drama intended for visual presentation, in which a certain verisimilitude is essential to the faith of the spectator. Whether any groups, surrounded with the associations of the Greek Mythology, and subjected to the capricious laws of Greek Superstition, could be endowed by genius itself with such present life as to awaken the sympathies of an English audience, may well be doubted; but it cannot be questioned, that except by sustaining a stern unity of purpose, and breathing an atmosphere of Grecian sentiment over the whole, so as to render the picture national and coherent in all its traits, the effect must be unsatisfactory and unreal. Conscious of my inability to produce a work thus justified to the imagination by its own completeness and power, I have not attempted it; but have sought, out of mere weakness, for 'Fate and metaphysical aid,' to 'crown withal' the ordinary persons of a romantic play. I have, therefore, asked far too much for a spectator to grant: but the case is different with the reader who does not seek the powerful excitements of the theatre, nor is bound to a continuous attention; and who, for the sake of scattered sentiments or expressions which may please him, may, at least by a latitude of friendly allowance, forgive the incongruities of the machinery by which the story is conducted. This Drama may be described as *the Phantasm* of a tragedy,—not a thing of substance mortised

into the living rock of humanity,—and therefore incapable of exciting that interest which grows out of human feeling, or of holding that permanent place in the memory, which truth only can retain.

"There are few perhaps among those who have written for the press, predominant as that majority now is over the minority of mere readers, who have not, at some season of their lives, contemplated the achievement of a tragedy. The narrow and well-defined limits by which the action of tragedy is circumscribed—the various affections which may live and wrestle, and suffer within those palpable boundaries—its appeal to the sources of grief common to humanity on the one hand, and to the most majestic shapings of the imagination on the other, softening and subduing the heart to raise and to ennoble it,—and perhaps, more than all, the vivid presentment of the forms in which the strengths and weaknesses of our nature are embodied, its calamities dignified, and its high destiny vindicated, even in the mortal struggle by which for a season it is vanquished—may well impress every mind, reaching, however feebly, towards the creative, with a fond desire to imitate the great masters of its 'so potent art.' This desire has a powerful ally in the exuberant spirits of youth, when the mind, unchilled by the sad realities of life, searches out for novelty in those forms of sorrow, from which it afterwards may turn for relief to the flickerings of mirth, and to brief snatches of social pleasure. Perhaps 'Gorgeous Tragedy' left a deeper impression when she passed 'sweeping by' my intellectual vision, then would have been otherwise received by a mind unapt for so high a correspondence, by reason of the accident that the glimpse was stolen. Denied by the conscientious scruples of friends an early acquaintance with plays, I had derived from Mrs. More's 'Sacred Dramas' my first sense of that peculiar enjoyment which the idea of dramatic action, however imperfectly conveyed, gives; and stiff and cumbrous as they now seem, I owe to their author that debt of gratitude, which others may perhaps share with me, who have first looked on the world of literature through the net-work of most sincere but exclusive opinions. These gave, however, but dim limits of the greatness which was behind;—I looked into the domain of tragedy as into a mountain region covered with mist and cloud;—and incapable of appreciating the deep humanities of Shakspere, 'rested and expatiated' in the brocaded grandeurs of Dryden, Rowe,

and Addison. To describe the delight with which, for the first time, I saw the curtain of Covent Garden Theatre raised for the representation of *Cato*, would be idle,—or how it was sustained during the noble performance which followed, when the visions of Roman constancy and classic grace, which had haunted the mind through all its schoolboy years (then drawing to a close,) seemed bodied forth in palpable form, when the poor commonplaces of an artificial diction flowed 'mended from the tongue' of the actor, and the thoughtful words trembling on his lips suggested at once the feeling of earthly weakness and of immortal hope,—and when the old Stoic, in his rigid grandeur, was reconciled to the human heart by the struggle of paternal love, and became 'passioned as ourselves,' without losing any portion of that statue-like dignity which made him the representative of a world of heroic dreamings.

"After this glimpse of the acted drama, I was long haunted by the idle wish to write a tragedy; and many hours did I happily, but vainly, spend in sober contemplations of its theme. I tried to wreathe several romantic and impossible stories, which I fashioned in my evening walks into acts, and began to write a scene; but however pleased I might be with the outline of these fantasies, I was too much disgusted with the alternate baldness and fustian of the blank verse, which I produced in the attempt to execute them, to proceed. At this time also, just as the laborious avocations of my life were commencing, my taste and feeling, as applied to poetry, underwent an entire change, consequent on my becoming acquainted with the poetry of Wordsworth. That power which, slighted and scoffed at as it was then, has since exerted a purifying influence on the literature of this country, such as no other individual power has ever wrought; which has not only given to the material universe 'a speech and a language' before unheard, but has opened new sources of enjoyment even in the works of the greatest poets of past days, and imparted a new sense by which we may relish them;—which, while on the one hand it has dissipated the sickly fascinations of gaudy phraseology, has, on the other, cast around the loveliest conditions a new and exquisite light, and traced out the links of good by which all human things are bound together, and clothed our earthly life in the solemnities which belong to its origin and its destiny—humbled the pride of my swelling conceits, and taught me to look on the mighty works of genius, not with the presumption of an imitator,

but with the veneration of a child. For the early enjoyment of this great blessing, which the sneers of popular critics might otherwise have withheld from me for years, I am indebted to my friend Mr. Baron Field, a worthy and beloved associate of the most original poets and thinkers of our time, who overcame my reluctance to peruse what the 'Edinburgh Review' had so triumphantly derided. The love of contemplative poetry, thus inspired, led me, in such leisure as I could attain, rather to ponder over the resources of the profoundest emotions, or to regard them as associated with the majestic forms of the universe, than to follow them into their violent conflicts and mournful catastrophes; and although I never ceased to regard the acted drama as the most delightful of recreations, I sought no longer to work out a frigid imitation of writers, whom alone I could hope to copy, and whose enchantments were dissipated by more genial magic.

"But the tragic drama was about to revive amongst us, and I was not insensible to its progress. Although the tragedies of the last twelve years are not worthy to be compared with the noblest productions of the great age of our drama, they are, with two or three exceptions, far superior to any which had been written in the interval. Since the last skirts of the glory of Shakspere's age disappeared, we shall search in vain for serious plays of equal power and beauty with *Virginius*, *William Tell*, *Mirandola*, *Rienzi*, or the *Merchant of London*; at least, if we except *Venice Preserved* for the admirable conduct of its story, and *Douglas* for that romantic tenderness and pathos which have been too little appreciated of late years. It happened to me to be intimately acquainted with all those who contributed to this impulse, and to take an immediate interest in their successes. I also enjoyed the friendship of the delightful artist to whom all have by turns been indebted for the realization of their noblest conceptions, and was enabled to enjoy with more exquisite relish the home-born affection with which those were endued, and the poetical grain breathed around them, by finding the same influences shed by Mr. Macready over the sphere of his social and domestic life. It will not be surprising, that, to one thus associated, the old wish to accomplish something in dramatic shape should recur, not accompanied by the hopes of sharing in the scenic triumphs of his friends, but bounded by the possibility of conducting a tale through dialogue to a close, and of making it subserve to the expression of some cherished thoughts. In this state of feeling,

some years ago, the scheme of the drama of *Ion* presented itself to me; and after brooding over it for some time, I wrote a prose outline of its successive scenes, nearly in the order and to the effect in which they are now completed, and made some progress in an opening scene of which little now remains. The attempt was soon laid aside; for I found the composition of dramatic blank verse even more difficult now that I had present to me the ease and vividness of my friends, than when I had been contented to emulate the ponderous lines of the dramatists of Garrick's age. Still the idea of my hero occurred to me often; I found my pleasantest thoughts gathering about him; and rather more than two years ago I determined to make one essay more. Since that time, such seasons of leisure as I could find have been devoted to the work; but I had so great distrust of my ability to complete it, that I did not mention my design to any one; and I cannot charge myself with having permitted it to interfere with any professional or private duty. At the close of last year, I found four acts reduced into form. At this time, the sudden realization of another youthful dream opened to me the prospect of additional duties, which I knew full well ought to preclude the continuance of those secret flirtations with the Muse in which I had indulged; and therefore I resolved to make a last effort, and, by completing my drama before those duties should commence, to free myself from the bondage of those threads of fantastical interest which had woven themselves about my mind. I accordingly wrote the fifth act with far more rapidity than any of the previous passages of my play; and, before I was called upon to share in more momentous business, I had communicated to a few friends the result of my scribblings, and bade adieu to my dramatic endeavours and hopes.

"But it may well be asked, Why, with the sense I have confessed of the feebleness of this poetical sketch, I venture to intrude it on my friends? My chief reason is, that I am anxious to cast from my own mind the associations which have hung about it during the composition of the poem, and which, while it remained in manuscript susceptible of alteration, I could not certainly hope for; and, further, to preclude the charge, (if it should ever be brought to light hereafter,) that it had occupied leisure which henceforth must be devoted to other studies. I have also a desire to gratify myself by presenting it to my friends, especially to those who are removed to a distance; because, although as a

drama it is unworthy the attention of the world, yet, as containing thoughts which have passed through my own mind, it may be acceptable to those whose conversation I can no longer enjoy. It would be a sufficient reason to myself for printing it, that I shall be able thus to remind Sir Edward Ryan, now, most honourably to himself, and happily for India, Chief Justice of Bengal, and his excellent colleague, Sir Benjamin Malkin, of the delightful hours we have spent together on the Oxford circuit, when life was younger with us, and when some of the topics they will find just touched on in these verses were the themes of our graver walks between Ross and Monmouth, or in the deep winding valleys indenting the table-land above Church Stretton, or haply by moonlight in the Churchyard of Ross.* I take leave to mention these, as far away; but there are others of my fellow-labourers at home, whose sympathy and whose conversation have cheered my professional life, who I believe will receive it cordially; and among them I hope my sometime Sessions-leader, who has committed a similar offence, though with more extenuating circumstances, by investing with so much dignity of passion and richness of language the story of the *Countess of Essex*, will not disdain it."

With these views *Ion* was sent to the press, and presented to many of my friends. The favour with which it was received by some, whose approbation was most valuable, would have induced me at once to publish it, if I had not been withheld by the suggestion of Mr. Macready, that it would be effective in representation, and by the belief that any interest which might be excited by such an attempt would be lessened by its previous sale. The prospect, that, at least for one evening, the dull tracery of thought, silently and laboriously woven, might burst into light at the torch of sympathy and become palpable to the senses and

* Since this reference to the friends of my early professional life was written, Sir Edward Ryan has returned to his country to enjoy the just reward of his labours in the East with the dignity of a Privy Councillor, and the satisfaction of accepting with the honour attendant duties, which his judicial ability and experience peculiarly fit him to discharge. The other, Sir Benjamin Malkin, has been taken from this world in the prime of life, and in the fulness of his powers,—leaving with us the recollection of an intellect as masculine and as refined—of judgment and feeling as discriminating and just—and of social qualities as warm and as equable, as have ever passed, by the mysterious dispensation of Providence, from vigorous exercise into a memory and an example.

the affections of a multitude, was too delightful to be resigned, and was ultimately realized by the friend who had opened it. His consent to produce the Drama on the night of his benefit secured it against painful repulse; and, although I had still no expectation that even *he* could endure it with sufficient interest to render it attractive on ordinary occasions, I looked forward to its single representation in the belief that it would be tolerated by an audience disposed to be gratified, and that the impression it might leave, however faint, would be genial and pure. Many of those who had expressed the most favourable opinions of the piece as a composition were even less sanguine than myself as to the probable event of the evening, and apprehended that it would terminate in their mortification and my own. They did not perceive the possibility of infusing such life into the character of its youthful hero, as would bring the whole fable within the sphere of human sympathies; reconcile the audience to its machinery; and render that which seemed only consistent in its dreaminess, at once entire and real. Such was, however, unquestionably the effect of Mr. Macready's performance on that evening, which I believe,—in the judgment of many who cannot be influenced, like the author, by personal regard or individual gratitude,—was one of the most remarkable triumphs of art which have graced the stage of late years. Although other of his performances are abstractedly greater, none I believe approach this as an effort of art, estimated with reference to the nature of the materials which he animated, to difficulties which he subdued, and to the preconceptions which he charmed away. By the graces of beautiful elocution, he beguiled the audience to receive the Drama as belonging to a range of associations which are no longer linked with the living world, but which retain an undying interest of a gentler cast, as a thing which *might have been;* and then, by his fearful power of making the fantastic real, he gradually rendered the whole possible—probable—true! The consequence of this extraordinary power of vivifying the frigid, and familiarizing the remote, was to dissipate the fears of my friends; to render the play an object of attraction during the short remainder of the season; and to embolden others to attempt the part, and encourage other audiences to approve it, even when the power which first gave it sanction was wanting.

How little it was anticipated that the success of the first performance would justify its repetition, may be gathered from the

.ogue, which was spoken on that occasion by Mr. Serle—a :leman, whose earnest and laborious pursuit of excellence as amatic poet and an actor, from early youth I have watched ı admiration; whose success I have hailed with delight; and ugh whom I was most happy to express my feelings.

"What airy visions on a play's first night
Have flush'd refulgent *here* on poet's sight!
While emulous of glory's stainless wreath,
He felt 'the future in the instant' breathe:
Saw in the soften'd gleam of radiant eyes
The sacred tear through lids yet tearless rise;
Made to each fervid heart the great appeal
To bear him witness—stamp'd with living seal—
Of passion into forms of grandeur wrought,
Or grief by beauty tinged, or raised by thought:
As cordial hands their liberal boon conferr'd,
Fame's awful whisper in the distance heard,
Now shrunk from nicest fear, from fancied scorn,
Now glow'd with hope for 'ages yet unborn.'

"With no such trembling sense of inward power
Our author seeks to win his little hour,
While to your transient glance, he dares unveil
The feeble outlines of a Grecian tale.
He boasts no magic skill your souls to draw
Within the circle of Athenian awe;
Where Fate on all things solemn beauty throws,
And shapes heroic mourn in stern repose;
Or to reveal the fame where genius tips
With love's immortal lustre heavenly lips,
Where airs divine yet breathe around forms so fair,
That Time enamour'd has been charm'd to spare
Nor his the power which deeds of old imbues
With present life, and tints with various hues;
Casts glowing passion in heroic moulds,
And makes young feelings burn 'neath ancient folds:
Unlearn'd in arts like these, he seeks to cast
One faint reflection from the glorious past;
A narrow space his fond ambition bounds,—
His little scenic life this evening rounds!

"O! if some image pure a moment play
O'er the soul's mirror ere it pass away;
If from some chance-sown thought a genial nerve
Should, heart-*strung, quicken* virtue's cause to serve;

> Let these slight gifts the breath of kindness claim
> For one night's bubble on the sea of Fame,
> Which tempts no aid, which future praise insures,—
> But lives—glows—trembles—and expires in yours!"

The part of the heroine, which affords too little scope for the development of tragic power, was on this night graced by the elegance and the pathos of Miss Ellen Tree, which, as personated on that night, will long be perpetuated by the genius and taste of Mr. Lane. As her engagements at the Haymarket rendered it impossible for her to repeat the character at Covent Garden, the Drama was indebted to the zeal and good-nature of Miss Helen Faucit for accepting it under these peculiar circumstances, and studying it within a few days, and to her talent for giving to it an importance which the author could not hope for from the faintness of its outline. Its subsequent production at the Haymarket calls for a sincere acknowledgment to Mr. Morris, the veteran manager of that delightful place of entertainment, and to all the members of his company, especially to Mr. Vandenhoff, for his kingly personation of Adrastus: to Miss Taylor, for her earnest and affecting Clemanthe; and, most of all, to the original representative of the heroine, who now illustrated the hero, and who has made the story of his sufferings and his virtues familiar to Transatlantic ears. Who is there who does not feel proud of the just appreciation, by the great American people, of one who is not only the exquisite representative of a range of delightful characters, but of all that is most graceful and refined in English womanhood,—or fail to cherish a wish for her fame and happiness, as if she were a personal friend or relation of his own?

There is one circumstance attendant on the circulation of this Drama, which has afforded me peculiar gratification—that it has been read without disapproval by many of those estimable persons whose conscientious scruples withhold them from the theatre, and has won some of them to confess that there is nothing in the form of dramatic poetry necessarily akin to guilty passions and ignoble aims. I am well aware, that it is indebted for this fortune not to any tone of moral feeling superior to that which is to be felt in its more powerful contemporaries, but to the incidental relations of its author, and to the manner of its original distribution; and I refer to it, therefore, with pleasure rather than with pride. If such as these are still deterred from sharing in the refined enjoyments of the acted drama, and from permitting their

children to receive from it the vivid impressions which it leaves, by a just fear of the accidental influences with which it has been too frequently associated, they may be assured that an opportunity is now offered to them of accepting the benefit without the alloy. They will find one of those great theatres—where alone the mightiest effects of heroic action and suffering can ever be felt, or their greatness fitly presented,—under the direction of an artist whose personal worth might grace any profession or rank, and who, in seeking to dissipate the languor which has crept over the general heart in reference to the stage, at the sacrifice of his own health and ease, and the risk of his well-earned fortune, has had the virtue and the courage to cast away all vicious appliances, and to discourage every blandishment except those by which Art embodies the conceptions of Genius. To Covent Garden Theatre the sternest moralist may now conduct those whose moral nurture he regards as his most anxious and most delightful duty, without fear lest their minds should be diverted from the blameless gaieties or noble passion of the scene by intrusive suggestions of vice, which he would screen, as far as possible from their thoughts.* If, indeed, dramatic representation itself is essentially evil; if it is a crime to render historic truths more vivid by calling forth its august figures from the depth of time and the silence of books, 'in their habits as they lived;' if it is a sin to displace the vapidity of conversation, revolving in its own small circle of personal experiences, by presenting the genial eccentricities of character to be at once laughed at and loved, and imagining the graces of society without its bitterness; if it is an offence against the Beneficent Author of our Being, 'to hold a mirror up' to the nature he has moulded, in which its grandest and its fairest varieties shall be reflected in the happiest combinations, as that choicest of all His human works—a poet's soul—has cast them; the attempts to remove from the magic glass all external impurities must be fruit-

* The effort which, at the time when these remarks were written, was in progress at Covent Garden Theatre, has since been repeated at Drury Lane Theatre, at a more costly sacrifice, and with more perfect success. If the loss nightly incurred by the extinction of those temptations to profligacy, which used to insure a receipt at second price, amounting in the course of the season to a large sum, was not compensated by the attendance of many who have shunned the theatre on the plea of their existence, it has at least conclusively shown that there is no inevitable connexion between the blandishments which relax and pervert the heart of youth and the images of action and suffering which enrich it. —and that *consciousness is doubtless its own* reward.

less. But if there are those who, while they hold the faith and morals of Milton, are not afraid to accept his precept and to follow his example, I would entreat of them to assist the lessee of a great national theatre in his generous struggle to rescue the stage from the pollutions which have too long debased it. I urge this on them thus earnestly, because in proportion as the dissipated and frivolous have withdrawn from this intellectual enjoyment, it becomes their province to sustain it; because I firmly believe that its maintenance is most important to the expansion of all that is social, and to the nurture of all that is great within us; because I deem it—not as an instructor in the way of direct moral invitation or purpose—but as dissolving the crust of selfishness which daily cares and labours gradually form about the kindest hearts—as softening the pride of conventional virtue, and bringing the outcasts of humanity within its sphere; and as combining all the picturesque varieties which external distinctions present with the sense of the noble equality which lies beneath them. If the introduction of this Drama to the notice of some who have hitherto abstained from visiting the theatre by objection to extrinsic circumstances, should induce them to enjoy the representation of plays of far deeper sentiment and far more vivid passion, it will not have been written nor acted in vain.

LONDON, 14*th November*, 1837.

ION;

A TRAGEDY.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*The Interior of the Temple of Apollo, which is supposed to be placed on a rocky eminence. Early morning. The interior lighted by a single lamp suspended from the roof.* AGENOR *resting against a column;*—IRUS *seated on a bench at the side of the scene.*

AGENOR *comes forward and speaks.*

Age. WILL the dawn never visit us? These hours
Toil heavy with the unresting curse they bear
To do the work of desolating years!
All distant sounds are hush'd;—the shriek of death
And the survivors' wail are now unheard,
As grief had worn itself to patience. Irus!
I'm loth so soon to break thy scanty rest,
But my heart sickens for the tardy morn;
Is it not breaking?—speed and look—yet hold,
Know'st thou the fearful shelf of rock that hangs
Above the encroaching waves, the loftiest point
That stretches eastward?
Irus. Know it? O full well!
There often have I bless'd the opening day,
Which thy free kindness gave me leave to waste
In happy wandering through the forests.
Age. Well,
Thou art not then afraid to tread it; there
The earliest streak from the unrisen sun

Is to be welcomed;—tell me how it gleams,
In bloody portent or in saffron hope,
And hasten back to slumber.
Irus. I shall hasten:
Believe not that thy summons broke my rest;
I was not sleeping. [*Exit* IRUS.
Age. Heaven be with thee, child!
His grateful mention of delights bestow'd
On that most piteous state of servile childhood
By liberal words chance dropp'd, hath touch'd a vein
Of feeling which I deem'd for ever numb'd,
And, by a gush of household memories, breaks
The icy casing of that thick despair
Which day by day hath gather'd o'er my heart,
While, basely safe, within this column'd circle,
Uplifted far into the purer air
And by Apollo's partial love secured,
I have, in spirit, glided with the plague
As in foul darkness or in sickliest light
It wafted death through Argos; and mine ears,
Listening athirst for any human sound,
Have caught the dismal cry of confused pain,
Which to this dizzy height the fitful wind
Hath borne from each sad quarter of the vale
Where life was.

Re-enter IRUS.

Are there signs of day-break?
Irus. None;
The eastern sky is still unbroken gloom.
Age. It cannot surely be. Thine eyes are dim
(No fault of thine) for want of rest, or now
I look upon them near, with scalding tears.
Hath care alighted on a head so young?
What grief hast thou been weeping?
Irus. Pardon me;
I never thought at such a mournful time
To plead my humble sorrow in excuse
Of poorly-rendered service: but my brother—
Thou mayst have noted him,—a sturdy lad,

With eyes so merry and with foot so light
That none could chide his gamesomeness—fell sick
But yesterday, and died in my weak arms
Ere I could seek for stouter aid: I hoped
That I had taught my grief to veil its signs
From thy observant care; but when I stood
Upon the well-known terrace where we loved,
Arm linked in arm to watch the gleaming sails—
His favourite pastime, for he burned to share
A seaman's hardy lot,—my tears would flow,
And I forgot to dry them. But I see
Cleon is walking yonder; let me call him;
For it must cheer thy heart to speak with him.

Age. Call him, good youth, and then go in to sleep,
Or, if thou wilt, to weep. [*Exit* Ius.
I envy thee
The privilege, but Jupiter forefend
That I should rob thee of it!

Enter Cleon.

Cleon. Hail, Agenor!
Dark as our lot remains, 'tis comfort yet
To find thy age unstricken.

Age. Rather mourn
That I am destined still to linger here
In strange unnatural strength, while death is round me.
I chide these sinews that are framed so tough
Grief cannot palsy them; I chide the air
Which round this citadel of nature breathes
With sweetness not of this world; I would share
The common grave of my dear countrymen,
And sink to rest while all familiar things
Old custom has endear'd are failing with me,
Rather than shiver on in life behind them
Nor should these walls detain me from the paths
Where death may be embraced, but that my word,
In a rash moment plighted to our host,
Forbids me to depart without his licence,
Which firmly he refuses.

Cleon. Do not chide me

If I rejoice to find the generous Priest
Means, with Apollo's blessing, to preserve
The treasure of thy wisdom;—nay, he trusts not
To promises alone; his gates are barr'd
Against thy egress:—none, indeed, may pass them
Save the youth Ion, to whose earnest prayer
His foster-father grants reluctant leave
To visit the sad city at his will:
And freely does he use the dangerous boon,
Which, in my thought, the love that cherish'd him
Since he was found within the sacred grove
Smiling amidst the storm, a most rare infant,
Should have had sternness to deny.

Age. What, Ion
The only inmate of this fane allow'd
To seek the mournful walks where death is busy!—
Ion our sometime darling, whom we prized
As a stray gift by bounteous Heaven dismiss'd
From some bright sphere which sorrow may not cloud
To make the happy happier! Is *he* sent
To grapple with the miseries of this time,
Whose nature such ethereal aspect wears
As it would perish at the touch of wrong?
By no internal contest is he train'd
For such hard duty; no emotions rude
Hath his clear spirit vanquish'd;—Love, the germ
Of his mild nature, hath spread graces forth,
Expanding with its progress, as the store
Of rainbow colour which the seed conceals
Sheds out its tints from its dim treasury,
To flush and circle in the flower. No tear
Hath fill'd his eye save that of thoughtful joy
When in the evening stillness, lovely things
Press'd on his soul too busily; his voice,
If, in the earnestness of childish sports,
Raised to the tone of anger, check'd its force,
As if it fear'd to break its being's law,
And falter'd into music; when the forms
Of guilty passion have been made to live
In pictured speech, and others have wax'd loud

In righteous indignation, he hath heard
With sceptic smile, or from some slender vein
Of goodness, which surrounding gloom conceal'd,
Struck sunlight o'er it: so his life hath flow'd
From its mysterious urn a sacred stream,
In whose calm depth the beautiful and pure
Alone are mirror'd; which, though shapes of ill
May hover round its surface, glides in light,
And takes no shadow from them.

Cleon. Yet, methinks,
Thou hast not lately met him, or a change
Pass'd strangely on him had not miss'd thy wonder.
His form appears dilated; in those eyes
Where pleasure danced, a thoughful sadness dwells;
Stern purpose knits the forehead, which till now
Knew not the passing wrinkle of a care;
Those limbs which in their heedless motion own'd
A stripling's playful happiness, are strung
As if the iron hardships of the camp
Had given them sturdy nurture; and his step,
Its airiness of yesterday forgotten,
Awakes the echoes of these desolate courts,
As if a hero of gigantic mould
Paced them in armour.

Age. Hope is in thy tale.
This is no freak of Nature's wayward course,
But work of pitying Heaven; for not in vain
The gods have pour'd into that guileless heart
The strengths that nerve the hero;—they are ours.

Cleon. How can he aid us? Can he stay the pulse
Of ebbing life,—arrest the infected winds,
Or smite the hungry spectre of the grave?

Age. And dost thou think these breezes are our foes,—
The innocent airs that used to dance around us,
As if they felt the blessings they convey'd,
Or that the death they bear is casual? No!
'Tis human guilt that blackens in the cloud,
Flashes athwart its mass in jagged fire,
Whirls in the hurricane, pollutes the air,
Turns all the joyous melodies of earth

To murmurings of doom. There is a foe
Who in the glorious summit of the state
Draws down the great resentment of the gods,
Whom he defies to strike us;—yet his power
Partakes that just infirmity which Nature
Blends in the empire of her proudest sons—
That it is cased within a single breast,
And may be plucked thence by a single arm.
Let but that arm, selected by the gods,
Do its great office on the tyrant's life,
And Argos breathes again!

Cleon. A footstep!—hush!
Thy wishes, falling on a slavish ear,
Would tempt another outrage; 'tis a friend—
An honest though a crabbed one—Timocles:
Something hath ruffled him.—Good day, Timocles!

[TIMOCLES *passes in front.*

He will not speak to us.

Age. But he *shall* speak.
Timocles—nay then, thus I must enforce thee;

[*Staying him.*

Thou wilt not cast from thee a comrade's hand
That may be cold ere sunset.

TIMOCLES (*giving his hand*). Thou mayst school me;
Thy years and love have licence: but I own not
A stripling's mastery; is't fit, Agenor?

Age. Nay, thou must tell thy wrong; whate'er it prove,
I hail thy anger as a hopeful sign,
For it revives the thought of household days,
When the small bickerings of friends had space
To fret, and Death was not for ever nigh
To frown upon Estrangement. What has moved thee?

Tim. I blush to tell it. Weary of the night
And of my life, I sought the western portal:
It open'd, when ascending from the stair
That through the rock winds spiral from the town,
Ion, the foundling cherish'd by the Priest,
Stood in the entrance: with such mild command
As he has often smilingly obey'd,
I bade him stand aside and let me pass;

When—wouldst thou think it?—in determined speech
He gave me counsel to return; I press'd
Impatient onward: he, with honied phrase
His daring act excusing, grasp'd my arm
With strength resistless; led me from the gate;
Replaced its ponderous bars; and, with a look
As modest as he wore in childhood, left me.
Age. And thou wilt thank him for it soon; he comes—
Now hold thy angry purpose if thou canst!

Enter ION.

Ion. I seek thee, good Timocles, to implore
Again thy pardon. I am young in trust,
And fear lest in the earnestness of love,
I stay'd thy course too rudely. Thou hast borne
My childish folly often,—do not frown
If I have ventured with unmanner'd zeal
To guard the ripe experience of years
From one rash moment's danger.
Tim. Leave thy care.
If I am weary of the flutterer life,
Is mortal bidding thus to cage it in?
Ion. And art thou tired of being? Has the grave
No terrors for thee? Hast thou sunder'd quite
Those thousand meshes which old custom weaves
To bind us earthward, and gay fancy films
With airy lustre various? Hast subdued
Those cleavings of the spirit to its prison,
Those nice regards, dear habits, pensive memories,
That change the valour of the thoughtful breast
To brave dissimulation of its fears?
Is Hope quench'd in thy bosom? Thou art free,
And in the simple dignity of man
Standest apart untempted:—do not lose
The great occasion thou hast pluck'd from misery,
Nor play the spendthrift with a great despair,
But use it nobly!
Tim. What, to strike? to slay?
Ion. No!—not unless the audible voice of Heaven
Call *thee to that dire office*; but to shed

On ears abused by falsehood, truths of power
In words immortal,—not such words as flash
From the fierce demagogue's unthinking rage,
To madden for a moment and expire,—
Nor such as the rapt orator imbues
With warmth of facile sympathy, and moulds
To mirrors radiant with fair images,
To grace the noble fervour of an hour;—
But words which bear the spirits of great deeds
Wing'd for the Future; which the dying breath
Of Freedom's martyr shapes as it exhales,
And to the most enduring forms of earth
Commits—to linger in the craggy shade
Of the huge valley, 'neath the eagle's home,
Or in the sea-cave where the tempest sleeps,
Till some heroic leader bid them wake
To thrill the world with echoes!—But I talk
Of things above my grasp, which strangely press
Upon my soul, and tempt me to forget
The duties of my youth;—pray you forgive me.

Tim. Have I not said so?

Age. Welcome to the morn!
The eastern gates unfold, the Priest approaches;

[*As* AGENOR *speaks, the great gates at the back of the scene open; the sea is discovered far beneath,—the dawn breaking over it;* MEDON, *the Priest, enters attended.*

And lo! the sun is struggling with the gloom,
Whose masses fill the eastern sky, and tints
Its edges with dull red;—but he *will* triumph;
Bless'd be the omen!

Me. God of light and joy,
Once more refresh us with thy healing beams
If I may trace thy language in the clouds
That wait upon thy rising, help is nigh—
But help achieved in blood.

Ion. Say'st thou in blood?

Me. Yes, Ion!—why, he sickens at the word,
Spite of his new-born strength;—the sights of woe

That he will seek have shed their paleness on him.
Has this night's walk shown more than common sorrow?
Ion. I passed the palace where the frantic king
Yet holds his crimson revel, whence the roar
Of desperate mirth came mingling with the sigh
Of death-subdued robustness, and the gleam
Of festal lamps 'mid spectral columns hung
Flaunting o'er shapes of anguish made them ghastlier.
How can I cease to tremble for the sad ones
He mocks—and him the wretchedest of all?
Tim. And canst thou pity him? Dost thou discern,
Amidst his impious darings, plea for him?
Ion. Is he not childless, friendless, and a king?
He's human; and some pulse of good must live
Within his nature—have ye tried to wake it?
Me. Yes; I believe he felt our sufferings once;
When, at my strong entreaty, he despatch'd
Phocion my son to Delphos, there to seek
Our cause of sorrow; but as time dragg'd on
Without his messenger's return, he grew
Impatient of all counsel,—to his palace
In awful mood retiring, wildly call'd
The reckless of his court to share his stores
And end all with him. When we dared disturb
His dreadful feastings with a humble prayer
That he would meet us, the poor slave, who bore
The message, flew back smarting from the scourge,
And mutter'd a decree that he who next
Unbidden met the tyrant's glance should die.
Age. I am prepared to brave it.
Cleon. So am I.
Tim. And I—
Ion. O Sages, do not think my prayer
Bespeaks unseemly forwardness—send me!
The coarsest reed that trembles in the marsh,
If Heaven select it for its instrument,
May shed celestial music on the breeze
As clearly as the pipe whose virgin gold
Befits the lip of Phœbus;—ye are wise;
And needed by your country; ye are fathers;

I am a lone stray thing, whose little life
By strangers' bounty cherish'd, like a wave
That from the summer sea a wanton breeze
Lifts for a moment's sparkle, will subside
Light as it rose, nor leave a sigh in breaking.
Me. Ion, no sigh!
Ion. Forgive me if I seem'd
To doubt that thou wilt mourn me if I fall;
Nor would I tax thy love with such a fear,
But that high promptings, which could never rise
Spontaneous in my nature, bid me plead
Thus boldly for the mission.
Me. My brave boy!
It shall be as thou wilt. I see thou art call'd
To this great peril, and I will not stay thee.
When wilt thou be prepared to seek it?
Ion. Now.
Only before I go, thus, on my knee,
Let me in one word thank thee for a life
Made by thy love one cloudless holiday;
And O, my more than father! let me look
Up to thy face as if indeed a father's,
And give me a son's blessing.
Me. Bless thee, son!
I should be marble now; let's part at once.
Ion. If I should not return, bless Phocion for me;
And, for Clemanthe may I speak one word,
One parting word with my fair playfellow?
Me. If thou wouldst have it so, thou shalt.
Ion. Farewell then!
Your prayers wait on my steps. The arm of Heaven
I feel in life or death will be around me. [*Exit.*
Me. O grant it be in life! Let's to the sacrifice.
[*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.—*An Apartment of the Temple.*

Enter CLEMANTHE *followed by* HABRA.

Clc. *Is he so* changed?
Habra. His bearing is so alter'd,

That, distant, I scarce knew him for himself;
But, looking in his face, I felt his smile
Gracious as ever, though his sweetness wore
Unwonted sorrow in it.
Cle. He will go
To some high fortune, and forget us all,
Reclaim'd (be sure of it) by noble parents;
Me he forgets already; for five days,
Five melancholy days, I have not seen him.
Habra. Thou knowest that he has privilege to range
The infected city; and, 'tis said he spends
The hours of needful rest in squalid hovels
Where death is most forsaken.
Cle. Why is this?
Why should my father, niggard of the lives
Of aged men, be prodigal of youth
So rich in glorious prophecy as his?
Habra. He comes to answer for himself. I'll leave you.
[*Exit.*
Cle. Stay! Well my heart may guard its secret best
By its own strength.

Enter ION.

Ion. How fares my pensive sister?
Cle. How should I fare but ill when the pale hand
Draws the black foldings of the eternal curtain
Closer and closer round us—Phocion absent—
And thou, forsaking all within thy home,
Wilt risk thy life with strangers, in whose aid
Even thou canst do but little?
Ion. It is little:
But in these sharp extremities of fortune,
The blessings which the weak and poor can scatter
Have their own season. 'Tis a little thing
To give a cup of water; yet its draught
Of cool refreshment, drain'd by fever'd lips,
May give a shock of pleasure to the frame
More exquisite than when Nectarean juice
Renews the life of joy in happiest hours.
It is a little thing to speak a phrase

Of common comfort which by daily use
Has almost lost its sense; yet on the ear
Of him who thought to die unmourn'd, 'twill fall
Like choicest music; fill the glazing eye
With gentle tears; relax the knotted hand
To know the bonds of fellowship again;
And shed on the departing soul a sense,
More precious than the benison of friends
About the honour'd death-bed of the rich,
To him who else were lonely, that another
Of the great family is near and feels.

Cle. O, thou canst never bear these mournful offices
So blithe, so merry once! Will not the sight
Of frenzied agonies unfix thy reason,
Or the dumb woe congeal thee?

Ion. No, Clemanthe:
They are the patient sorrows that touch nearest!
If thou hadst seen the warrior when he writhed
In the last grapple of his sinewy frame
With conquering anguish strive to cast a smile
(And not in vain) upon his fragile wife,
Waning beside him,—and, his limbs composed,
The widow of the moment fix her gaze
Of longing, speechless love upon the babe,
The only living thing which yet was hers,
Spreading its arms for its own resting-place
Yet with attenuated hand wave off
The unstricken child, and so embraceless die
Stifling the mighty hunger of the heart;
Thou couldst endure the sight of selfish grief
In sullenness or frenzy;—but to-day
Another lot falls on me.

Cle. Thou wilt leave us!
I read it plainly in thy altered mien;
Is it for ever?

Ion. That is with the gods!
I go but to the palace, urged by hope,
Which from afar hath darted on my soul,
That to the humbleness of one like me
The haughty king may listen.

Cle. To the palace!
Knowest thou the peril—nay the certain issue
That waits thee? Death!—the tyrant has decreed it
Confirm'd it with an oath; and he has power
To keep that oath; for, hated as he is,
The reckless soldiers who partake his riot
Are swift to do his bidding.
Ion. I know all!
But they who call me to the work can shield me,
Or make me strong to suffer.
Cle. Then the sword
Falls on thy neck! O Gods! to think that thou,
Who in the plenitude of youthful life
Art now before me, ere the sun decline,
Perhaps in one short hour, shall lie cold, cold,
To speak, smile, bless no more!—Thou shalt not go!
Ion. Thou must not stay me, fair one; even thy father,
Who (blessings on him!) loves me as his son,
Yields to the will of Heaven.
Cle. And he can do this!
I shall not bear his presence if thou fallest
By his consent; so shall I be alone.
Ion. Phocion will soon return, and juster thoughts
Of thy admiring father close the gap
Thy old companion left behind him.
Cle. Never!
What will to me be father, brother, friends,
When thou art gone—the light of our life quench'd—
Haunting like spectres of departed joy
The home where thou wert dearest?
Ion. Thrill me not
With words that, in their agony, suggest
A hope too ravishing—or my head will swim,
And my heart faint within me.
Cle. Has my speech
Such blessed power? I will not mourn it then,
Though it hath told a secret I had borne
Till death in silence:—how affection grew
To this I know not;—day succeeded day,
Each fraught with the same innocent delights,

Without one shock to ruffle the disguise
Of sisterly regard which veil'd it well,
Till thy chang'd mien reveal'd it to my soul
And thy great peril makes me bold to tell it.
Do not despise it in me!

Ion. With deep joy
Thus I receive it. Trust me, it is long
Since I have learn'd to tremble 'midst our pleasures,
Lest I should break the golden dream around me
With most ungrateful rashness. I should bless
The sharp and perilous duty which hath press'd
A life's deliciousness into these moments,—
Which here must end. I came to say farewell,
And the word must be said.

Cle. Thou canst not mean it!
Have I disclaimed all maiden bashfulness,
To tell the cherished secret of my soul
To my soul's master, and in rich return
Obtain'd the dear assurance of his love,
To hear him speak that miserable word
I cannot—will not echo?

Ion. Heaven has call'd me,
And I have pledged my honour. When thy heart
Bestow'd its preference on a friendless boy,
Thou didst not image him a recreant; nor
Must he prove so, by thy election crown'd.
Thou hast endow'd me with a right to claim
Thy help through this our journey, be its course
Lengthen'd to age, or in an hour to end;
And now I ask it!—bid my courage hold,
And with thy free approval send me forth
In soul apparell'd for my office!

Cle. Go!
I would not have thee other than thou art,
Living or dying—and if thou shouldst fall—

Ion. Be sure I shall return.

Cle. If thou shouldst fall,
I shall be happier as the affianced bride
Of thy cold ashes, than in proudest fortunes—
Thine—ever thine— [She faints in his arms.

Ion. (*calls*) Habra!—So best to part—

Enter HABRA.

Let her have air; be near her through the day;
I know thy tenderness—should ill news come
Of any friend, she will require it all.

[HABRA *bears* CLEMANTHE *out.*

Ye Gods, that have enrich'd the life ye claim
With priceless treasure, strengthen me to yield it!

[*Exit.*

ACT II.

SCENE I.—*A Terrace of the Palace.*

ADRASTUS, CRYTHES.

Adras. The air breathes freshly after our long night
Of glorious revelry. I'll walk awhile.

Cry. It blows across the town; dost thou not fear
It bear infection with it?

Adras. Fear! dost talk
Of fear to me? I deem'd even thy poor thoughts
Had better scann'd their master. Prithee tell me
In what act, word, or look, since I have borne
Thy converse here, hast thou discern'd such baseness
As makes thee bold to prate to me of fear?

Cry. My liege, of human might all know thee fearless,
But may not heroes shun the elements
When sickness taints them?

Adras. Let them blast me now!—
I stir not; tremble not; these massive walls,
Whose date o'erawes tradition, gird the home
Of a great race of kings, along whose line
The eager mind lives aching, through the darkness
Of ages else unstoried, till its shapes
Of armed sovereigns spread to godlike port,
And, frowning in the uncertain dawn of time,
Strike awe, as powers who ruled an elder world,

In mute obedience. I, sad heritor
Of all their glories, feel our doom is nigh;
And I will meet it as befits their fame:
Nor will I vary my selected path
The breadth of my sword's edge, nor check a wish,
If such unkingly yielding might avert it.
Cry. Thou art ever royal in thy thoughts.
Adras. No more—
I would be private. [*Exit* CRYTHES.
Grovelling parasite!
Why should I waste these fate-environ'd hours,
And pledge my great defiance to despair
With flatterers such as thou!—as if my joys
Required the pale reflections cast by slaves
In mirror'd mockery round my throne, or lack'd
The aid of reptile sympathies to stream
Through fate's black pageantry? Let weakness seek
Companionship: I'll henceforth feast alone.

Enter a Soldier.

Soldier. My liege, forgive me,—
Adras. Well! Speak out at once
Thy business, and retire.
Soldier. I have no part
In the presumptuous message that I bear.
Adras. Tell it, or go. There is no time to waste
On idle terrors.
Soldier. Thus it is, my lord:
As we were burnishing our arms, a man
Enter'd the court, and when we saw him first
Was tending towards the palace; in amaze,
We hail'd the rash intruder; still he walk'd
Unheeding onward, till the western gate
Barr'd further course; then turning, he besought
Our startled band to herald him to thee,
That he might urge a message which the sages
Had charged him to deliver.
Adras. Ah! the graybeards
Who, 'mid the altars of the gods, conspire
To cast the image of supernal power

From earth its shadow consecrates. What sage
Is so resolved to play the orator
That he would die for't?
Soldier. He is but a youth,
Yet urged his prayer with a sad constancy
Which could not be denied.
Adras. Most bravely plann'd!
Sedition worthy of the reverend host
Of sophist traitors; brave to scatter fancies
Of discontent 'midst sturdy artizans,
Whose honest sinews they direct unseen,
And make their proxies in the work of peril!
'Tis fit, when burning to insult their king,
And warn'd the pleasure must be bought with life,
Their valour send a boy to speak their wisdom!
Thou know'st my last decree; tell this rash youth
The danger he incurs;—then let him pass,
And own the king more gracious than his masters.
Soldier. We have already told him of the fate
Which waits his daring; courteously he thank'd us,
But still with solemn accent urged his suit.
Adras. Tell him once more, if he persists he dies—
Then, if he will, admit him. Should he hold
His purpose, order Crythes to conduct him,
And see the headsman instantly prepare
To do his office. [*Exit* Soldier.
So resolved so young—
'Twere pity he should fall; yet he *must* fall,
Or the great sceptre which hath sway'd the fears
Of ages, will become a common staff
For youth to wield, or age to rest upon,
Despoil'd of all its virtues. He *must* fall,
Else they who prompt the insult will grow bold,
And with their pestilent vauntings through the city
Raise the low fog of murky discontent,
Which now creeps harmless through its marshy birth-
To veil my setting glories. He is warn'd; [place.
And if he cross yon threshold he shall die.

Enter CRYTHES *and* ION.

Cry. The king!

Adras. Stranger, I bid thee welcome;
We are about to tread the same dark passage,
Thou almost on the instant.—Is the sword [*To* CRY.
Of justice sharpen'd, and the headsman ready?

Cry. Thou may'st behold them plainly in the court;
Even now the solemn soldiers line the ground,
The steel gleams on the altar, and the slave
Disrobes himself for duty.

Adras. (*To* ION.) Dost thou see them?

Ion. I do.

Adras. By Heaven, he does not change!
If, even now, thou wilt depart and leave
Thy traitorous thoughts unspoken, thou art free.

Ion. I thank thee for thy offer; but I stand
Before thee for the lives of thousands, rich
In all that makes life precious to the brave;
Who perish not alone, but in their fall
Break the far-spreading tendrils that they feed,
And leave them nurtureless. If thou wilt hear me
For them, I am content to speak no more.

Adras. Thou hast thy wish then. Crythes! till yon
Cast its thin shadow on the approaching hour, [dial
I hear this gallant traitor. On the instant,
Come without word, and lead him to his doom.
Now leave us.

Cry. What, alone?

Adras. Yes, slave, alone.
He is no assassin! [*Exit* CRYTHES.
Tell me who thou art.
What generous source owns that heroic blood,
Which holds its course thus bravely? What great wars
Have nursed the courage that can look on death,
Certain and speedy death, with placid eye?

Ion. I am a simple youth who never bore
The weight of armour,—one who may not boast
Of noble birth or valour of his own.
Deem not the powers which nerve me thus to speak
In thy great presence, and have made my heart

Upon the verge of bloody death as calm,
As equal in its beatings, as when sleep
Approach'd me nestling from the sportive toils
Of thoughtless childhood, and celestial forms
Began to glimmer through the deepening shadows
Of soft oblivion to belong to me!—
These are the strengths of Heaven; to thee they speak,
Bid thee to hearken to thy people's cry,
Or warn thee that thy hour must shortly come!

Adras. I know it must; so may'st thou spare thy
The envious gods in me have doom'd a race, [warnings.
Whose glories stream from the same cloud-girt founts,
Whence their own dawn upon the infant world;
And I shall sit on my ancestral throne
To meet their vengeance; but till then I rule
As I have ever ruled, and thou wilt feel.

Ion. I will not further urge thy safety to thee;
It may be, as thou say'st, too late; nor seek
To make thee tremble at the gathering curse
Which shall burst forth in mockery at thy fall·
But thou art gifted with a nobler sense—
I know thou art my sovereign! sense of pain
Endured by myriad Argives, in whose souls,
And in whose fathers' souls, thou and thy fathers
Have kept their cherish'd state; whose heartstrings, still
The living fibres of thy rooted power,
Quiver with agonies thy crimes have drawn
From heavenly justice on them.

Adras. How! my crimes?

Ion. Yes; 'tis the eternal law, that where guilt is,
Sorrow shall answer it; and thou hast not
A poor man's privilege to bear alone,
Or in the narrow circle of his kinsmen,
The penalties of evil, for in thine
A nation's fate lies circled.—King Adrastus!
Steeled as thy heart is with the usages
Of pomp and power, a few short summers since
Thou wert a child, and canst not be relentless.
Oh, if maternal love embraced thee then,
Think *of the mothers* who with eyes unwet

Glare o'er their perishing children: hast thou shared
The glow of a first friendship, which is born
'Midst the rude sports of boyhood, think of youth
Smitten amidst its playthings;—let the spirit
Of thy own innocent childhood whisper pity!
Adras. In every word thou dost but steel my soul.
My youth was blasted;—parents, brother, kin—
All that should people infancy with joy—
Conspired to poison mine; despoil'd my life
Of innocence and hope—all but the sword
And sceptre—dost thou wonder at me now?
Ion. I knew that we should pity—
Adras. Pity! dare
To speak that word again, and torture waits thee!
I am yet king of Argos. Well, go on—
Thy time is short, and I am pledged to hear.
Ion. If thou hast ever loved—
Adras. Beware! beware!
Ion. Thou hast! I see thou hast! Thou art not mar-
And thou shalt hear me!—Think upon the time [ble,
When the clear depths of thy yet lucid soul
Were ruffled with the troublings of strange joy,
As if some unseen visitant from heaven
Touch'd the calm lake and wreath'd its images
In sparkling waves;—recall the dallying hope
That on the margin of assurance trembled,
As loth to lose in certainty too bless'd
Its happy being;—taste in thought again
Of the stolen sweetness of those evening-walks,
When pansied turf was air to winged feet,
And circling forests, by ethereal touch
Enchanted, wore the livery of the sky,
As if about to melt in golden light
Shapes of one heavenly vision; and thy heart,
Enlarged by its new sympathies with one,
Grew bountiful to all!
Adras. That tone! that tone!
Whence came it? from thy lips? It cannot be—
The long-hush'd music of the only voice
That ever spake unbought affection to me,

And waked my soul to blessing!—O sweet hours
Of golden joy, ye come! your glories break
Through my pavilion'd spirit's sable folds!
Roll on! roll on!—Stranger, thou dost enforce me
To speak of things unbreathed by lip of mine
To human ear:—wilt listen?

Ion. As a child.

Adras. Again!—that voice again!—thou hast seen
As never mortal saw me, by a tone [me moved,
Which some light breeze, enamour'd of the sound,
Hath wafted through the woods, till thy young voice
Caught it to rive and melt me. At my birth
This city, which, expectant of its Prince,
Lay hush'd, broke out in clamorous extacies;
Yet, in that moment, while the uplifted cups
Foam'd with the choicest product of the sun,
And welcome thunder'd from a thousand throats,
My doom was seal'd. From the hearth's vacant space,
In the dark chamber where my mother lay,
Faint with the sense of pain-bought happiness,
Came forth, in heart-appaling tone, these words
Of me the nurseling—"Woe unto the babe!
"Against the life which now begins shall life,
"Lighted from thence, be arm'd, and, both soon quench'd,
"End this great line in sorrow!"—Ere I grew
Of years to know myself a thing accurs'd,
A second son was born, to steal the love
Which fate had else scarce rifled: he became
My parents' hope, the darling of the crew
Who lived upon their smiles, and thought it flattery
To trace in every foible of my youth—
A prince's youth!—the workings of the curse;
My very mother—Jove! I cannot bear
To speak it now—look'd freezingly upon me!

Ion. But thy brother—

Adras. Died. Thou hast heard the lie,
The common lie that every peasant tells
Of me his master,—that I slew the boy.
'Tis false! One summer's eve, below a crag
Which, in his wilful mood, he strove to climb,

He lay a mangled corpse: the very slaves,
Whose cruelty had shut him from my heart,
Now coin'd their own injustice into proofs
To brand me as his murderer.
Ion. Did they dare
Accuse thee?
Adras. Not in open speech:—they felt
I should have seized the miscreant by the throat,
And crush'd the lie half spoken with the life
Of the base speaker:—but the tale look'd out
From the stolen gaze of coward eyes, which shrank
When mine have met them: murmur'd through the crowd
That at the sacrifice, or feast, or game,
Stood distant from me; burnt into my soul
When I beheld it in my father's shudder!
Ion. Didst not declare thy innocence?
Adras. To whom?
To parents who could doubt me? To the ring
Of grave impostors, or their shallow sons,
Who should have studied to prevent my wish
Before it grew to language; hail'd my choice
To service as a prize to wrestle for;
And whose reluctant courtesy I bore,
Pale with proud anger, till from lips compress'd
The blood has started! To the common herd,
The vassals of our ancient house, the mass
Of bones and muscles framed to till the soil
A few brief years, then rot unnamed beneath it,
Or, deck'd for slaughter at their master's call,
To smite and to be smitten, and lie crush'd
In heaps to swell his glory or his shame?
Answer to them? No! though my heart had burst,
As it was nigh to bursting!—To the mountains
I fled, and on their pinnacles of snow
Breasted the icy wind, in hope to cool
My spirit's fever—struggled with the oak
In search of weariness, and learn'd to rive
Its stubborn boughs, till limbs once lightly stung
Might mate in cordage with its infant stems;
Or on the sea-beat rock tore off the vest

Cle. To the palace!
Knowest thou the peril—nay the certain issue
That waits thee? Death!—the tyrant has decreed it
Confirm'd it with an oath; and he has power
To keep that oath; for, hated as he is,
The reckless soldiers who partake his riot
Are swift to do his bidding.
Ion. I know all!
But they who call me to the work can shield me,
Or make me strong to suffer.
Cle. Then the sword
Falls on thy neck! O Gods! to think that thou,
Who in the plenitude of youthful life
Art now before me, ere the sun decline,
Perhaps in one short hour, shall lie cold, cold,
To speak, smile, bless no more!—Thou shalt not go!
Ion. Thou must not stay me, fair one; even thy father,
Who (blessings on him!) loves me as his son,
Yields to the will of Heaven.
Cle. And he can do this!
I shall not bear his presence if thou fallest
By his consent; so shall I be alone.
Ion. Phocion will soon return, and juster thoughts
Of thy admiring father close the gap
Thy old companion left behind him.
Cle. Never!
What will to me be father, brother, friends,
When thou art gone—the light of our life quench'd—
Haunting like spectres of departed joy
The home where thou wert dearest?
Ion. Thrill me not
With words that, in their agony, suggest
A hope too ravishing—or my head will swim,
And my heart faint within me.
Cle. Has my speech
Such blessed power? I will not mourn it then,
Though it hath told a secret I had borne
Till death in silence:—how affection grew
To this I know not;—day succeeded day,
Each fraught with the same innocent delights,

As stricken into stone: I heard him cry,
Press'd by the rudeness of the murderer's gripe,
Severer ill unfearing—then the splash
Of waters that shall cover him for ever;
And could not stir to save him!

Ion. And the mother—

Adras. She spake no word, but clasp'd me in her arms,
And lay her down to die. A lingering gaze
Of love she fixed on me—none other loved,
And so pass'd hence. By Jupiter, her look!
Her dying patience glimmers in thy face!
She lives again! She looks upon me now!
There's magic in't. Bear with me—I am childish.

Enter CRYTHES *and* Guards.

Adras. Why art thou here?

Cry. The dial points the hour.

Adras. Dost thou not see that horrid purpose pass'd?
Hast thou no heart—no sense?

Cry. Scarce half an hour
Hath flown since the command on which I wait.

Adras. Scarce half an hour!—years—years have roll'd since then.
Begone! remove that pageantry of death—
It blasts my sight—and hearken! Touch a hair
Of this brave youth, or look on him as now
With thy cold headsman's eye, and yonder band
Shall not expect a fearful show in vain.
Hence! without a word. [*Exit* CRYTHES.
What wouldst thou have me do?

Ion. Let thy awaken'd heart speak its own language;
Convene thy sages;—frankly, nobly meet them;
Explore with them the pleasure of the gods,
And, whatsoe'er the sacrifice, perform it.

Adras. Well! I will seek their presence in an hour;
Go summon them, young hero: hold! no word
Of the strange passion thou hast witness'd here.

Ion. Distrust me not.—Benignant Powers, I thank ye! [*Exit.*

Adras. Yet stay—he's gone—his spell is on me yet;

What have I promised him? To meet the men
Who from my living head would strip the crown,
And sit in judgment on me?—I must do it—
Yet shall my band be ready to o'erawe
The course of liberal speech, and if it rise
So as too loudly to offend my ear,
Strike the rash brawler dead?—What idle dream
Of long-past days had melted me? It fades—
It vanishes—I am again a king!

SCENE II.—*The Interior of the Temple.*

Same as ACT I. SCENE I.

CLEMANTHE *seated*—HABRA *attending her.*

Habra. Look, dearest lady!—the thin smoke aspires
In the calm air, as when in happier times
It show'd the gods propitious: wilt thou seek
Thy chamber, lest thy father and his friends,
Returning, find us hinderers of their council?
She answers not—she hearkens not—with joy
Could I believe her, for the first time sullen!
Still she is rapt.

Enter AGENOR.

O speak to my sweet mistress;
Haply thy voice may rouse her.
Age. Dear Clemanthe,
Hope dawns in every omen; we shall taste
Our household joys again.

Enter MEDON, CLEON, TIMOCLES, *and others.*

Me. Clemanthe here!
How sad! how pale!
Habra. Her eye is kindling—hush!
Cle. Hark! hear ye not a distant footstep?
Me. No.
Look round, my fairest child; thy friends are near thee.
Cle. Yes!—now 'tis lost—'tis on that endless stair—
Nearer and *more distinct*—'tis his—'tis his—
He lives! he comes!

[CLEMANTHE *rises and rushes to the back of the stage, at which* ION *appears, and returns with her.*

Here is your messenger,
Whom heaven has rescued from the tyrant's rage
Ye sent him forth to brave. Rejoice, old men,
That ye are guiltless of his blood!—why pause ye?
Why shout ye not his welcome?

Me. Dearest girl,
This is no scene for thee; go to thy chamber;
I'll come to thee ere long.

[*Exeunt* CLEMANTHE *and* HABRA.

She is o'erwrought
By fear and joy for one whose infant hopes
Were mingled with her own, even as a brother's.

Tim. Ion!
How shall we do thee honour?

Ion. None is due
Save to the gods whose gracious influence sways
The king ye deem'd relentless;—he consents
To meet ye presently in council:—speed!
This may be virtue's latest rally in him,
In fitful strength, ere it be quench'd for ever!

Me. Haste to your seats; I will but speak a word
With our brave friend, and follow: though convened
In speed, let our assembly lack no forms
Of due observance, which to furious power
Plead with the silent emphasis of years.

[*Exeunt all but* MEDON *and* ION.

Ion, draw near me; this eventful day
Hath shown thy nature's graces circled round
With firmness which accomplishes the hero;—
And it would bring to me but one proud thought—
That virtues which required not culture's aid
Shed their first fragrance 'neath my roof, and there
Found shelter;—but it also hath reveal'd
What I may not hide from thee, that my child,
My blithe and innocent girl—more fair in soul,
More delicate in fancy, than in mould—
Loves thee with other than a sister's love.
I should have cared for this: I vainly deem'd

A fellowship in childhood's thousand joys
And household memories had nurtured friendship
Which might hold peaceful empire in the soul;
But in that guise the traitor hath stolen in,
And the fair citadel is thine.

Ion. 'Tis true.
I did not think the nurseling of thy house
Could thus disturb its holiest inmate's duty
With tale of selfish passion;—but we met
As playmates who might never meet again,
And then the hidden truth flash'd forth, and show'd
To each the image in the other's soul
In one bright instant.

Me. Be that instant blest
Which made thee truly ours. My son! my son!
'Tis we should feel uplifted, for the seal
Of greatness is upon thee; yet I know
That when the gods, won by thy virtues, draw
The veil which now conceals their lofty birthplace,
Thou wilt not spurn the maid who prized them lowly.

Ion. Spurn her! My father!

Enter CTESIPHON.

Me. Ctesiphon!—and breathless—
Art come to chide me to the council?

Ctes. No;
To bring unwonted joy; thy son approaches. [well?

Me. Thank Heaven! Hast spoken with him? Is he

Ctes. I strove in vain to reach him, for the crowd,
Roused from the untended couch and dismal hearth
By the strange visiting of hope, press'd round him!
But, by his head erect and fiery glance,
I know that he is well, and that he bears
A message which shall shake the tyrant. [*Shouts.*] See!
The throng is tending this way—now it parts,
And yields him to thy arms.

Enter PHOCION.

Me. Welcome, my Phocion—
Long waited for in Argos; how detain'd

Now matters not, since thou art here in joy.
Hast brought the answer of the god?
Pho. I have
Now let Adrastus tremble!
Me. May we hear it?
Pho. I am sworn first to utter it to him.
Ctes. But it is fatal to him!—Say but that!
Pho. Ha, Ctesiphon!—I mark'd thee not before:
How fares thy father?
Ion (*to* PHOCION). Do not speak of him.
Ctes. (*overhearing* ION). Not speak of him! Dost think
there is a moment
When common things eclipse the burning thought
Of him and vengeance?
Pho. Has the tyrant's sword—
Ctes. No, Phocion; that were merciful and brave,
Compared to his base deed; yet will I tell it
To make the flashing of thine eye more deadly,
And edge thy words that they may rive his heartstrings.
The last time that Adrastus dared to face
The Sages of the state, although my father,
Yielding to Nature's mild decay, had left
All worldly toil and hope, he gather'd strength,
In his old seat, to speak one word of warning.
Thou know'st how bland with years his wisdom grew,
And with what phrases, steep'd in love, he sheathed
The sharpness of rebuke; yet, ere his speech
Was closed, the tyrant started from his throne,
And with his base hand smote him; 'twas his death-
The old man totter'd home, and only once [stroke!
Raised his head after.
Pho. Thou wert absent? Yes!
The heartless tyrant lives!
Ctes. Had I beheld
That sacrilege, Adrastus had lain dead,
Or I had been torn piecemeal by his minions.
But I was far away: when I return'd,
I found my father on the nearest bench
Within our door, his thinly silver'd head
Supported by wan hands, which hid his face

And would not be withdrawn;—no groan, no sigh
Was audible, and we might only learn
By short convulsive tremblings of his frame
That life still flicker'd in it—yet at last,
By some unearthly inspiration roused,
He dropp'd his wither'd hands, and sat erect
As in his manhood's glory—the free blood
Flush'd crimson through his cheeks, his furrow'd brow
Expanded clear, and his eyes opening full
Gleam'd with a youthful fire;—I fell in awe
Upon my knees before him—still he spake not,
But slowly raised his arm untrembling; clench'd
His hand as if it grasp'd an airy knife,
And struck in air: my hand was joined with his
In nervous grasp—my lifted eye met his
In steadfast gaze—my pressure answered his—
We knew at once each other's thought; a smile
Of the old sweetness play'd upon his lips,
And life forsook him. Weaponless I flew
To seek the tyrant, and was driven with scoffs
From the proud gates which shelter him. He lives—
And I am here to babble of revenge! [king!

Pho. It comes, my friend—haste with me to the

Ion. Even while we speak, Adrastus meets his council;
There let us seek him: should ye find him touch'd
With penitence, as happily ye may,
O give allowance to his soften'd nature!

Ctes. Show grace to him!—Dost dare?—I had for-
Thou dost not know how a son loves a father! [got.

Ion. I know enough to feel for thee; I know
Thou hast endured the vilest wrong that tyranny
In its worst frenzy can inflict;—yet think,
O think! before the irrevocable deed
Shuts out all thought, how much of power's excess
Is theirs who raise the idol:—do we groan
Beneath the personal force of this rash man,
Who forty summers since hung at the breast
A *playful weakling; whom* the heat unnerves;
The north wind pierces; and the hand of death

Will, in a moment, change to clay as vile
As that of the scourged slave whose chains it sever'd?
No! 'tis our weakness gasping, or the shows
Of outward strength that builds up tyranny,
And makes it look so glorious:—If we shrink
Faint-hearted from the reckoning of our span
Of mortal days, we pamper the fond wish
For long duration in a line of kings:
If the rich pageantry of thoughts must fade
All unsubstantial as the regal hues
Of eve which purpled them, our cunning frailty
Must robe a living image with their pomp,
And wreath a diadem around its brow,
In which our sunny fantasies may live
Empearl'd, and gleam, in fatal splendour, far
On after ages. We must look *within*
For that which makes us slaves:—on sympathies
Which find no kindred objects in the plain
Of common life—affections that aspire
In air too thin—and fancy's dewy film
Floating for rest; for even such delicate threads,
Gather'd by Fate's engrossing hand, supply
The eternal spindle whence she weaves the bond
Of cable strength in which our nature struggles!

Ctes. Go talk to others, if thou wilt;—to me
All argument, save that of steel, is idle.

Me. No more:—let's to the council—there, my son,
Tell thy great message nobly;—and for thee,
Poor orphan'd youth, be sure the gods are just! [*Exeunt.*

SCENE III.—*The great Square of the City.* ADRASTUS *seated on a throne;* AGENOR, TIMOCLES, CLEON, *and others, seated as Councillors—Soldiers line the stage at a distance.*

Adras. Upon your summons, Sages, I am here;
Your king attends to know your pleasure; speak it!

Age. And canst thou ask? If the heart dead within thee
Receives no impress of this awful time,
Art thou of sense forsaken? Are thine ears
So charm'd by strains of slavish minstrelsy,

That the dull groan and frenzy-pointed shriek
Pass them unheard to Heaven? Or are thine eyes
So conversant with prodigies of grief,
They cease to dazzle at them? Art thou arm'd
'Gainst wonder, while, in all things, Nature turns
To dreadful contraries;—while Youth's full cheek
Is shrivell'd into furrows of sad years,
And 'neath its glossy curls untinged by care
Looks out a keen anatomy;—while Age
Is stung by feverish torture for an hour
Into youth's strength; while fragile Womanhood
Starts into frightful courage, all alike
The gentle strength its gentle weakness feeds
To make affliction beautiful, and stalks
Abroad, a tearless and unshuddering thing;—
While Childhood, in its orphan'd freedom blithe,
Finds, in the shapes of wretchedness which seem
Grotesque to its unsadden'd vision, cause
For dreadful mirth that shortly shall be hush'd
In never-broken silence; and while Love,
Immortal through all change, makes ghastly Death
Its idol, and with furious passion digs
Amid sepulchral images for gauds
To cheat its fancy with?—Do sights like these
Glare through the realm thou shouldst be parent to,
And canst thou find the voice to ask "our pleasure?"

Adras. Cease, babbler;—wherefore would ye stun [my ears
With vain recital of the griefs I know,
And cannot heal?—will treason turn aside
The shafts of fate, or medicine Nature's ills?
I have no skill in pharmacy, nor power
To sway the elements.

Age. Thou hast the power
To cast thyself upon the earth with us
In penitential shame; or, if this power
Hath left a heart made weak by luxury
And hard by pride, thou hast at least the power
To cease the mockery of thy frantic revels.

Adras. I have yet power to punish insult—look
I use it not, Agenor!—Fate may dash

My sceptre from me, but shall not command
My will to hold it with a feebler grasp;
Nay, if few hours of empire yet are mine,
They shall be colour'd with a sterner pride,
And peopled with more lustrous joys, than flush'd
In the serene procession of its greatness,
Which look'd perpetual, as the flowing course
Of human things. Have ye beheld a pine
That clasp'd the mountain-summit with a root
As firm as its rough marble, and, apart
From the huge shade of undistinguish'd trees,
Lifted its head as in delight to share
The evening glories of the sky, and taste
The wanton dalliance of the heavenly breeze
That no ignoble vapour from the vale
Could mingle with—smit by the flaming marl,
And lighted for destruction? How it stood
One glorious moment, fringed and wreathed with fire
Which showed the inward graces of its shape,
Uncumber'd now, and midst its topmost boughs,
That young ambition's airy fancies made
Their giddy nest, leap'd sportive;—never clad
By liberal summer in a pomp so rich
As waited on its downfall, while it took
The storm-cloud roll'd behind it for a curtain
To gird its splendours round, and made the blast
Its minister to whirl its flashing shreds
Aloft towards heaven, or to the startled depths
Of forests that afar might share its doom!
So shall the royalty of Argos pass
In festal blaze to darkness! Have ye spoken?

Age. I speak no more to thee!—Great Jove, look down! [*Shouting without.*

Adras. What factious brawl is this?—disperse it, soldiers.

[*Shouting renewed—As some of the soldiers are about to march,* PHOCION *rushes in, followed by* CTESIPHON, ION, *and* MEDON.

Whence is this insolent intrusion?

Pho. King!
I bear Apollo's answer to thy prayer.
Adras. Has not thy travel taught thy knee its duty?
Here we had school'd thee better.
Pho. Kneel to thee!
Me. Patience, my son! Do homage to the king.
Pho. Never!—thou talk'st of schooling—know,
That I have studied in a nobler school [Adrastus,
Than the dull haunt of venal sophistry
Or the lewd guard-room; o'er which ancient heaven
Extends its arch for all, and mocks the span
Of palaces and dungeons; where the heart
In its free beatings, 'neath the coarsest vest,
Claims kindred with diviner things than power
Of kings can raise or stifle—in the school
Of mighty Nature—where I learn'd to blush
At sight like this, of thousands basely hush'd
Before a man no mightier than themselves,
Save in the absence of that love that softens.
Adras. Peace! speak thy message.
Pho. Shall I tell it here?
Or shall I seek thy couch at dead of night,
And breathe it in low whispers?—As thou wilt.
Adras. Here—and this instant!
Pho. Hearken then, Adrastus,
And hearken, Argives—thus Apollo speaks:—
[*Reads a scroll.*

"*Argos ne'er shall find release*
"*Till her monarch's race shall cease.*"

Adras. 'Tis not God's will, but man's sedition speaks:—
Guards! tear that lying parchment from his hands,
And bear him to the palace.
Me. Touch him not,—
He is Apollo's messenger, whose lips
Were never stain'd with falsehood.
Pho. Come on, all!
Age. Surround him, Friends! Die with him!
Adras. Soldiers, charge
Upon these rebels; hew them down. On, on!

[*The soldiers advance and surround the people; they seize* PHOCION. ION *rushes from the back of the stage, and throws himself between* ADRASTUS *and* PHOCION.

Pho. [*To* ADRASTUS.] Yet I defy thee.

Ion. [*To* PHOCION.] Friend! for sake of all,
Enrage him not,—wait while I speak a word—
[*To* ADRASTUS.] My sovereign, I implore thee, do not stain
This sacred place with blood; in Heaven's great name
I do conjure thee—and in *hers*, whose shade
Is mourning for thee now!

Adras. Release the stripling—
Let him go spread his treason where he will:
He is not worth my anger. To the palace!

Ion. Nay, yet an instant!—let my speech have power
From Heaven to move thee further: thou hast heard
The sentence of the god, and thy heart owns it;
If thou wilt cast aside this cumbrous pomp,
And in seclusion purify thy soul
Long fever'd and sophisticate, the gods
May give thee space for penitential thoughts;
If not—as surely as thou standest here,
Wilt thou lie stiff and weltering in thy blood—
The vision presses on me now.

Adras Art mad?
Resign thy state? Sue to the gods for life,
The common life which every slave endures,
And meanly clings to? No; within yon walls
I shall resume the banquet, never more
Broken by man's intrusion. Councillors,
Farewell!—go mutter treason till ye perish!

[*Exeunt* ADRASTUS, CRYTHES *and* Soldiers.

Ion. (*who stands apart leaning on a pedestal*). 'Tis seal'd!

Me. Let us withdraw, and strive
By sacrifice to pacify the gods!

(MEDON, AGENOR, *and* Councillors, *retire: they leave* CTESIPHON, PHOCION, *and* ION. ION *still stands apart, as rapt in meditation.*

Ctes. 'Tis well: the measure of his guilt is fill'd.
Where shall we meet at sunset?

Pho In the grove,

Which with its matted shade imbrowns the vale,
Between those buttresses of rock that guard
The sacred mountain on its western side,
Stands a rude altar—overgrown with moss,
And stain'd with drippings of a million showers,
So old, that no tradition names the power
That hallow'd it,—which we will consecrate
Anew to freedom and to justice.

Ctes. Thither
Will I bring friends to meet thee. Shall we speak
To yon rapt youth? [*Pointing to* ION.

Pho. His nature is too gentle.
At sunset we will meet.—With arms?

Ctes. A knife—
One sacrificial knife will serve.

Pho. At sunset!

[*Exeunt* CTESIPHON *and* PHOCION *severally.* ION *comes forward.*

Ion. O wretched King, thy words have seal'd thy doom!
Why should I shiver at it, when no way,
Save this, remains to break the ponderous cloud
That hangs above my wretched country?—death—
A single death, the common lot of all,
Which it will not be mine to look upon,—
And yet its ghastly shape dilates before me;
I cannot shut it out; my thoughts grow rigid,
And as that grim and prostrate figure haunts them,
My sinews stiffen like it. Courage, Ion!
No spectral form is here; all outward things
Wear their own old familiar looks: no dye
Pollutes them. Yet the air has scent of blood,
And now it eddies with a hurtling sound,
As if some weapon swiftly clove it. No—
The falchion's course is silent as the grave
That yawns before its victim. Gracious powers!
If the great duty of my life be near,
Grant it may be to suffer, not to strike! [*Ext.*

ACT III.

SCENE I.—*A Terrace of the Temple.*

CLEMANTHE, ION.

Cle. Nay I must chide this sorrow from thy brow,
Or 'twill rebuke my happiness;—I know
Too well the miseries that hem us round;
And yet the inward sunshine of my soul,
Unclouded by their melancholy shadows,
Bathes in its deep tranquillity one image—
One only image, which no outward storm
Can ever ruffle. Let me wean thee, then,
From this vain pondering o'er the general woe,
Which makes my joy look guilty.

Ion. No, my fair one,
The gloom that wrongs thy love is unredeemed
By generous sense of others' woe: too sure
It rises from dark presages within,
And will not from me.

Cle. Then it is most groundless!
Hast thou not won the blessings of the perishing
By constancy, the fame of which shall live
While a heart beats in Argos?—hast thou not
Upon one agitated bosom pour'd
The sweetest peace? and can thy generous nature,
While it thus sheds felicity around it,
Remain itself unbless'd!

Ion. I strove awhile
To think the assured possession of thy love
With too divine a burthen weigh'd my heart,
And press'd my spirits down;—but 'tis not so:
Nor will I with false tenderness beguile thee,
By feigning that my sadness has a cause
So exquisite. Clemanthe! thou wilt find me
A sad companion;—I who knew not life,
Save as the sportive breath of happiness,
Now feel my minutes teeming as they rise,
With grave experiences; I dream no more
Of azure realms where restless beauty sports

In myriad shapes fantastic; dismal vaults
In black succession open, till the gloom
Afar is broken by a streak of fire
That shapes my name—the fearful wind that moans
Before the storm articulates its sound;
And as I pass'd but now the solemn range
Of Argive monarchs, that in sculptured mockery
Of present empire sit, their eyes of stone
Bent on me instinct with a frightful life
That drew me into fellowship with them,
As conscious marble; while their ponderuos lips—
Fit organs of eternity—unclosed,
And, as I live to tell thee, murmur'd "Hail!
Hail! ION THE DEVOTED!"

Cle. These are fancies,
Which thy soul, late expanded with great purpose,
Shapes, as it quivers to its natural circle
In which its joys should lurk, as in the bud
The cells of fragrance cluster. Bid them from thee,
And strive to be thyself.

Ion. I will do so!
I'll gaze upon thy loveliness, and drink
Its quiet in;—how beautiful thou art!—
My pulse throbs now as it was wont;—a being,
Which owns so fair a glass to mirror it,
Cannot show darkly.

Cle. We shall soon be happy;
My father will rejoice to bless our love,
And Argos waken;—for her tyrant's course
Must have a speedy end.

Ion. It must! it must!

Cle. Yes; for no empty talk of public wrongs
Assails him now; keen hatred and revenge
Are roused to crush him.

Ion. Not by such base agents
May the august lustration be achieved:
He who shall cleanse his country from the guilt
For which Heaven smites her, should be pure of soul,
Guileless as *infancy, and* undisturb'd
By personal anger as thy father is,

Now matters not, since thou art here in joy.
Hast brought the answer of the god?
Pho. I have
Now let Adrastus tremble!
Me. May we hear it?
Pho. I am sworn first to utter it to him.
Ctes. But it is fatal to him!—Say but that!
Pho. Ha, Ctesiphon!—I mark'd thee not before:
How fares thy father?
Ion (*to* PHOCION). Do not speak of him.
Ctes. (*overhearing* ION). Not speak of him! Dost think
there is a moment
When common things eclipse the burning thought
Of him and vengeance?
Pho. Has the tyrant's sword—
Ctes. No, Phocion; that were merciful and brave,
Compared to his base deed; yet will I tell it
To make the flashing of thine eye more deadly,
And edge thy words that they may rive his heartstrings.
The last time that Adrastus dared to face
The Sages of the state, although my father,
Yielding to Nature's mild decay, had left
All worldly toil and hope, he gather'd strength,
In his old seat, to speak one word of warning.
Thou know'st how bland with years his wisdom grew,
And with what phrases, steep'd in love, he sheathed
The sharpness of rebuke; yet, ere his speech
Was closed, the tyrant started from his throne,
And with his base hand smote him; 'twas his death-
The old man totter'd home, and only once [stroke!
Raised his head after.
Pho. Thou wert absent? Yes!
The heartless tyrant lives!
Ctes. Had I beheld
That sacrilege, Adrastus had lain dead,
Or I had been torn piecemeal by his minions.
But I was far away: when I return'd,
I found my father on the nearest bench
Within our door, his thinly silver'd head
Supported by wan hands, which hid his face

And would not be withdrawn;—no groan, no sigh
Was audible, and we might only learn
By short convulsive tremblings of his frame
That life still flicker'd in it—yet at last,
By some unearthly inspiration roused,
He dropp'd his wither'd hands, and sat erect
As in his manhood's glory—the free blood
Flush'd crimson through his cheeks, his furrow'd brow
Expanded clear, and his eyes opening full
Gleam'd with a youthful fire;—I fell in awe
Upon my knees before him—still he spake not,
But slowly raised his arm untrembling; clench'd
His hand as if it grasp'd an airy knife,
And struck in air: my hand was joined with his
In nervous grasp—my lifted eye met his
In steadfast gaze—my pressure answered his—
We knew at once each other's thought; a smile
Of the old sweetness play'd upon his lips,
And life forsook him. Weaponless I flew
To seek the tyrant, and was driven with scoffs
From the proud gates which shelter him. He lives—
And I am here to babble of revenge! [king!

Pho. It comes, my friend—haste with me to the

Ion. Even while we speak, Adrastus meets his council;

There let us seek him: should ye find him touch'd
With penitence, as happily ye may,
O give allowance to his soften'd nature!

Ctes. Show grace to him!—Dost dare?—I had for- [got.
Thou dost not know how a son loves a father!

Ion. I know enough to feel for thee; I know
Thou hast endured the vilest wrong that tyranny
In its worst frenzy can inflict;—yet think,
O think! before the irrevocable deed
Shuts out all thought, how much of power's excess
Is theirs who raise the idol:—do we groan
Beneath the personal force of this rash man,
Who forty summers since hung at the breast
A playful *weakling; whom* the heat unnerves;
The north wind pierces; and the hand of death

Will, in a moment, change to clay as vile
As that of the scourged slave whose chains it sever?
No! 'tis our weakness gasping, or the shows
Of outward strength that builds up tyranny,
And makes it look so glorious:—If we shrink
Faint-hearted from the reckoning of our span
Of mortal days, we pamper the fond wish
For long duration in a line of kings:
If the rich pageantry of thoughts must fade
All unsubstantial as the regal hues
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In which our sunny fantasies may live
Empearl'd, and gleam, in fatal splendour, far
On after ages. We must look *within*
For that which makes us slaves:—on sympathies
Which find no kindred objects in the plain
Of common life—affections that aspire
In air too thin—and fancy's dewy film
Floating for rest; for even such delicate threads,
Gather'd by Fate's engrossing hand, supply
The eternal spindle whence she weaves the bond
Of cable strength in which our nature struggles!

Ctes. Go talk to others, if thou wilt;—to me
All argument, save that of steel, is idle.

Me. No more:—let's to the council—there, my son,
Tell thy great message nobly;—and for thee,
Poor orphan'd youth, be sure the gods are just! [*Exeunt.*

SCENE III.—*The great Square of the City.* ADRASTUS *seated on a throne;* AGENOR, TIMOCLES, CLEON, *and others, seated as Councillors—Soldiers line the stage at a distance.*

Adras. Upon your summons, Sages, I am here;
Your king attends to know your pleasure; speak it!

Age. And canst thou ask? If the heart dead within
Receives no impress of this awful time, [thee
Art thou of sense forsaken? Are thine ears
So charm'd by strains of slavish minstrelsy,

Is at this moment open; by that gate
We all may enter unperceived and line
The passages which gird the royal chamber.
While one blest hand accomplishes the doom
Which Heaven pronounces. Nothing now remains,
But that as all would share this action's glory,
We join in one great vow, and choose one arm
Our common minister. Oh, if these sorrows
Confer on me the office to return
Upon the tyrant's shivering heart the blow
Which crush'd my father's spirit, I will leave
To him who cares for toys the patriot's laurel
And the applause of ages!

Pho. Let the gods
By the old course of lot reveal the name
Of the predestined champion. For myself,
Here do I solemnly devote all powers
Of soul and body to that glorious purpose
We live but to fulfil.

Ctes. And I!

Cas. And I!

Ion. [*Who has advanced from the wood, rushes to the altar and exclaims*] And I!

Pho. Most welcome! The sereneſt powers of justice,
In prompting thy unspotted soul to join
Our bloody councils sanctify and bless them!

Ion. The gods have prompted me, for they have given
One dreadful voice to all things which should be
Else dumb or musical: and I rejoice
To step from the grim ground or waking dreams
Into this fellowship which makes all clear.
Wilt trust me, Ctesiphon?

Ctes. Yes: but we waste
The precious minutes in vain talk: if lots
Must guide us, have ye scrolls?

Pho. Cassander has them:
The flickering light of yonder glade will serve him
To inscribe them with our names. Be quick, Cassander.

Ctes. I wear a casque, beneath whose iron circlet

My sceptre from me, but shall not command
My will to hold it with a feebler grasp;
Nay, if few hours of empire yet are mine,
They shall be colour'd with a sterner pride,
And peopled with more lustrous joys, than flush'd
In the serene procession of its greatness,
Which look'd perpetual, as the flowing course
Of human things. Have ye beheld a pine
That clasp'd the mountain-summit with a root
As firm as its rough marble, and, apart
From the huge shade of undistinguish'd trees,
Lifted its head as in delight to share
The evening glories of the sky, and taste
The wanton dalliance of the heavenly breeze
That no ignoble vapour from the vale
Could mingle with—smit by the flaming marl,
And lighted for destruction? How it stood
One glorious moment, fringed and wreathed with fire
Which showed the inward graces of its shape,
Uncumber'd now, and midst its topmost boughs,
That young ambition's airy fancies made
Their giddy nest, leap'd sportive;—never clad
By liberal summer in a pomp so rich
As waited on its downfall, while it took
The storm-cloud roll'd behind it for a curtain
To gird its splendours round, and made the blast
Its minister to whirl its flashing shreds
Aloft towards heaven, or to the startled depths
Of forests that afar might share its doom!
So shall the royalty of Argos pass
In festal blaze to darkness! Have ye spoken?

Age. I speak no more to thee!—Great Jove, look down! [*Shouting without.*

Adras. What factious brawl is this?—disperse it, soldiers.

[*Shouting renewed—As some of the soldiers are about to march,* PHOCION *rushes in, followed by* CTESIPHON, ION, *and* MEDON.

Whence is this insolent intrusion?

Pho. King!
I bear Apollo's answer to thy prayer.
Adras. Has not thy travel taught thy knee its duty?
Here we had school'd thee better.
Pho. Kneel to thee!
Me. Patience, my son! Do homage to the king.
Pho. Never!—thou talk'st of schooling—know,
That I have studied in a nobler school [Adrastus,
Than the dull haunt of venal sophistry
Or the lewd guard-room; o'er which ancient heaven
Extends its arch for all, and mocks the span
Of palaces and dungeons; where the heart
In its free beatings, 'neath the coarsest vest,
Claims kindred with diviner things than power
Of kings can raise or stifle—in the school
Of mighty Nature—where I learn'd to blush
At sight like this, of thousands basely hush'd
Before a man no mightier than themselves,
Save in the absence of that love that softens.
Adras. Peace! speak thy message.
Pho. Shall I tell it here?
Or shall I seek thy couch at dead of night,
And breathe it in low whispers?—As thou wilt.
Adras. Here—and this instant!
Pho. Hearken then, Adrastus,
And hearken, Argives—thus Apollo speaks:—
[*Reads a scroll.*

"*Argos ne'er shall find release*
"*Till her monarch's race shall cease.*"

Adras. 'Tis not God's will, but man's sedition speaks:—
Guards! tear that lying parchment from his hands,
And bear him to the palace.
Me. Touch him not,—
He is Apollo's messenger, whose lips
Were never stain'd with falsehood.
Pho. Come on, all!
Age. Surround him, Friends! Die with him!
Adras. Soldiers, charge
Upon these rebels; hew them down. On, on!

[*The soldiers advance and surround the people; they seize* PHOCION. ION *rushes from the back of the stage, and throws himself between* ADRASTUS *and* PHOCION.

Pho. [*To* ADRASTUS.] Yet I defy thee.

Ion. [*To* PHOCION.] Friend! for sake of all,
Enrage him not,—wait while I speak a word—
[*To* ADRASTUS.] My sovereign, I implore thee, do not stain
This sacred place with blood; in Heaven's great name
I do conjure thee—and in *hers*, whose shade
Is mourning for thee now!

Adras. Release the stripling—
Let him go spread his treason where he will:
He is not worth my anger. To the palace!

Ion. Nay, yet an instant!—let my speech have power
From Heaven to move thee further: thou hast heard
The sentence of the god, and thy heart owns it;
If thou wilt cast aside this cumbrous pomp,
And in seclusion purify thy soul
Long fever'd and sophisticate, the gods
May give thee space for penitential thoughts;
If not—as surely as thou standest here,
Wilt thou lie stiff and weltering in thy blood—
The vision presses on me now.

Adras Art mad?
Resign thy state? Sue to the gods for life,
The common life which every slave endures,
And meanly clings to? No; within yon walls
I shall resume the banquet, never more
Broken by man's intrusion. Councillors,
Farewell!—go mutter treason till ye perish!

[*Exeunt* ADRASTUS, CRYTHES *and* Soldiers.

Ion. (*who stands apart leaning on a pedestal*). 'Tis seal'd!

Me. Let us withdraw, and strive
By sacrifice to pacify the gods!

(MEDON, AGENOR, *and* Councillors, *retire: they leave* CTESIPHON, PHOCION, *and* ION. ION *still stands apart, as rapt in meditation.*

Ctes. 'Tis well: the measure of his guilt is fill'd.
Where shall we meet at sunset?

Pho In the grove,

What have I promised him? To meet the men
Who from my living head would strip the crown,
And sit in judgment on me?—I must do it—
Yet shall my band be ready to o'erawe
The course of liberal speech, and if it rise
So as too loudly to offend my ear,
Strike the rash brawler dead?—What idle dream
Of long-past days had melted me? It fades—
It vanishes—I am again a king!

SCENE II.—*The Interior of the Temple.*

Same as ACT I. SCENE I.

CLEMANTHE *seated*—HABRA *attending her.*

Habra. Look, dearest lady!—the thin smoke aspires
In the calm air, as when in happier times
It show'd the gods propitious: wilt thou seek
Thy chamber, lest thy father and his friends,
Returning, find us hinderers of their council?
She answers not—she hearkens not—with joy
Could I believe her, for the first time sullen!
Still she is rapt.

Enter AGENOR.

O speak to my sweet mistress;
Haply thy voice may rouse her.
Age. Dear Clemanthe,
Hope dawns in every omen; we shall taste
Our household joys again.

Enter MEDON, CLEON, TIMOCLES, *and others.*

Me. Clemanthe here!
How sad! how pale!
Habra. Her eye is kindling—hush!
Cle. Hark! hear ye not a distant footstep?
Me. No.
Look round, my fairest child; thy friends are near thee.
Cle. Yes!—now 'tis lost—'tis on that endless stair—
Nearer and *more distinct*—'tis his—'tis his—
He lives! he comes!

Me. It was to meet him.
I would they were return'd; the night is grown
Of an unusual blackness. Some one comes—
Look if it be my daughter.
Hab. [*looking out*]. No; young Irus,
The little slave, whose pretty tale of grief
Agenor, with so gracious a respect,
This morning told us.
Me. Let him come; he bears
Some message from his master.

Enter IRUS.

Me. [*to* IRUS.] Thou art pale:
Has any evil happen'd to Agenor?
Irus. No, my good lord; I do not come from him
I bear to thee a scrool from one who now
Is number'd with the dead; he was my kinsman,
But I had never seen him till he lay
Upon his death-bed; for he left these shores
Long before I was born, and no one knew
His place of exile;—on this mournful day
He landed, was plague-stricken, and expired.
My gentle master gave me leave to tend
His else unsolaced death-bed;—when he found
The clammy chillness of the grave steal on,
He call'd for parchment, and with trembling hand,
That seem'd to gather firmness from its task,
Wrote earnestly; conjured me take the scroll
Instant to thee; and died.
[IRUS *gives a scroll to* MEDUS
Me. [*reading the scroll*]. These are high tidings.
Habra! is not Clemanthe come? I long
To tell her all.

Enter CLEMANTHE.

Me. Sit down, my pensive child.
Habra, this boy is faint; see him refresh'd
With food and wine before thou lett'st him pass.
Irus. I have too long been absent from Agenor,
Who needs my slender help.

Me. Nay, I will use
Thy master's firmness here, and use it so
As he would use it. Keep him prisoner, Habra,
Till he has done my bidding. [*Exeunt* HABRA *and* IRUS.
Now, Clemanthe,
Though thou hast play'd the truant and the rebel,
I will not be too strict in my award,
By keeping from thee news of one to thee
Most dear—nay, do not blush—I say most dear.
Cle. It is of Ion;—no—I do not blush,
But tremble. O my father, what of Ion?
Me. How often have we guess'd his lineage noble!
And now 'tis proved. The kinsman of that youth
Was with another hired to murder him
A babe;—they tore him from his mother's breast,
And to a sea-girt summit where a rock
O'erhung a chasm, by the surge's force
Made terrible, rush'd with him. As the gods
In mercy order'd it, the foremost ruffian,
Who bore no burden, pressing through the gloom
In the wild hurry of his guilty purpose,
Trod at the extreme verge upon a crag
Loosen'd by summer from its granite bed,
And suddenly fell with it;—with his fall
Sank the base daring of the man who held
The infant; so he placed the unconscious babe
Upon the spot where it was found by me;
Watch'd till he saw the infant safe; then fled,
Fearful of question; and return'd to die.
That child is Ion. Whom dost guess his sire?—
The first in Argos.
Cle. Dost thou mean Adrastus?
He cannot—must not—be that tyrant's son!
Me. It is most certain. Nay, my thankless girl,
He hath no touch of his rash father's pride;
For Nature, from whose genial lap he smiled
Upon us first, hath moulded for her own
The suppliant of her bounty;—thou art bless'd;
Thus, let me bid thee joy.

Cle. Joy, sayst thou—joy!
Then I must speak—he seeks Adrastus' life;
And at this moment while we talk may stain
His soul with parricide.
Me. Impossible!
Ion, the gentlest——
Cle. It is true, my father;
I saw the weapon gleaming in his vest;
I heard him call'd!
Me. Shall I alarm the palace?
Cle. No; in the fierce confusion he would fall
Before our tale could be its safeguard. Gods!
Is there no hope, no refuge?
Me. Yes, if Heaven
Assist us. I bethink me of a passage,
Which, fashioned by a king in pious zeal,
That he might seek the altar of the god
In secret, from the temple's inmost shrine
Leads to the royal chamber. I have track'd it
In youth for pastime. Could I thread it now,
I yet might save him.
Cle. O, make haste my father!
Shall I attend thee?
Me. No; thou wouldst impede
My steps;—thou art fainting; when I have lodged thee
In thy own chamber, I will light the torch, [safe
And instantly set forward.
Cle. Do not waste
An instant's space on me; speed, speed, my father—
The fatal moments fly; I need no aid;
Thou seest I am calm, quite calm.
Me. The gods protect thee!
[*Exeunt severally.*

ACT IV.

SCENE I.—*The Royal Chamber.* ADRASTUS *on a couch, asleep.*

Enter ION *with the knife.*

Ion. Why do I creep thus stealthily along
With trembling steps? Am I not arm'd by Heaven
To execute its mandate on a king
Whom it hath doom'd? And shall I falter now,
While every moment that he breathes may crush
Some life else happy?—Can I be deceived
By some foul passion, crouching in my soul,
Which takes a radiant form to lure me on?
Assure me, gods!—Yes; I have heard your voices;
For I dare pray ye now to nerve my arm
And see me strike! [*He goes to the couch.*
He's smiling in his slumber
As if some happy thought of innocent days
Play'd at his heart-strings; must I scare it thence
With death's sharp agony? He lies condemn'd
By the high judgment of supernal Powers,
And he shall know their sentence. Wake, Adrastus!
Collect thy spirits, and be strong to die!

Adras. Who dares disturb my rest? Guards! Soldiers! Recreants!
Where tarry ye? Why smite ye not to earth
This bold intruder?—Ha! no weapon here!—
What wouldst thou with me, ruffian? [*Rising.*

Ion. I am none,
But a sad instrument in Jove's great hand
To take thy life, long forfeited—Prepare
Thy hour is come!

Adras. Villains! does no one hear?

Ion. Vex not the closing minutes of thy being
With torturing hope or idle rage; thy guards,
Palsied with revelry, are scatter'd senseless,
While the most valiant of our Argive youths
Hold every passage by which human aid
Could reach thee. Present death is the award

Of powers who watch above me while I stand
To execute their sentence.
Adras. Thou!—I know thee—
The youth I spared this morning; in whose ear
I pour'd the secrets of my bosom. Kill me,
If thou darest do it; but bethink thee first
How the grim memory of thy thankless deed
Will haunt thee to the grave!
Ion. It is most true;
Thou sparedst my life, and therefore do the gods
Ordain me to this office, lest thy fall
Seem the chance forfeit of some single sin,
And not the great redress of Argos. Now—
Now, while I parley—Spirits that have left,
Within this hour, their plague-tormented flesh
To rot untomb'd, glide by, and frown on me,
Their slow avenger—and the chamber swarms
With looks of furies—Yet a moment wait,
Ye dreadful prompters!—If there is a friend,
Whom dying thou wouldst greet by word or token,
Speak thy last bidding.
Adras. I have none on earth.
If thou hast courage, end me!
Ion. Not one friend!
Most piteous doom!
Adras. Art melted?
Ion. If I am,
Hope nothing from my weakness; mortal arms,
And eyes unseen that sleep not, gird us round,
And we shall fall together. Be it so!
Adras. No; strike at once; my hour is come: in thee
I recognize the minister of Jove,
And, kneeling thus, submit me to his power.
[ADRASTUS *kneels.*
Ion. Avert thy face!
Adras. No; let me meet thy gaze;
For breathing pity lights thy features up
Into more awful likeness of a form
Which once shone on me; and which now my sense
Shapes palpable—in habit of the grave

Inviting me to the sad realm where shades
Of innocents whom passionate regard
Link'd with the guilty, are content to pace
With them the margin of the inky flood
Mournful and calm;—'tis surely there;—she waves
Her pallid hand in circle o'er thy head,
As if to bless thee—and I bless thee too,
Death's gracious angel!—Do not turn away.

Ion. Gods! to what office have ye doom'd me! Now!

[ION *raises his arm to stab* ADRASTUS, *who is kneeling, and gazes steadfastly upon him. The voice of* MEDON *is heard without, calling* ION! ION!—ION *drops his arm.*

Adras. Be quick, or thou art lost!

[*As* ION *has again raised his arm to strike,* MEDON *rushes in behind him.*

Me. Ion, forbear!
Behold thy son, Adrastus!

[ION *stands for a moment stupified with horror, drops the knife, and falls senseless on the ground.*

Adras. What strange words
Are these which call my senses from the death
They were composed to welcome? Son! 'tis false—
I had but one—and the deep wave rolls o'er him!

Me. That wave received, instead of the fair nurseling,
One of the slaves who bore him from thy sight
In wicked haste to slay;—I'll give thee proofs.

Adras. Great Jove, I thank thee!—raise him gen-
Are there not here the lineaments of her [tly—proofs!
Who made me happy once—the voice, now still,
That bade the long-seal'd fount of love gush out,
While with a prince's constancy he came
To lay his noble life down; and the sure,
The dreadful proof, that he whose guileless brow
Is instinct with her spirit, stood above me,
Arm'd for the traitor's deed?—It is my child!

[ION *reviving, sinks on one knee before* ADRASTUS.

Ion. Father! [*Noise without.*

Me. The clang of arms!

Ion. [*starting up*]. They come! they come!

They who are leagued with me against thy life.
Here let us fall!

Adras. I will confront them yet.
Within I have a weapon which has drunk
A traitor's blood ere now;—there will I wait them:
No power less strong than death shall part us now.

[*Exeunt* ADRASTUS *and* ION *as to an inner chamber*

Me. Have mercy on him, gods, for the dear sake
Of your most single-hearted worshipper!

Enter CTESIPHON, CASSANDER, *and others.*

Ctes. What treachery is this—the tyrant fled,
And Ion fled too!—Comrades, stay this dotard,
While I search yonder chamber.

Me. Spare him, friend,—
Spare him to clasp awhile his new-found son;
Spare him as Ion's father!

Ctes. Father! yes—
That is indeed a name to bid me spare;
Let me but find him, gods!

[*He rushes into the inner chamber.*

Me. [*to Cassander and the others*] Had ye but seen
What I have seen, ye would have mercy on him.

CRYTHES *enters with* Soldiers.

Ha, soldiers! hasten to defend your master;
That way——

[*As* CRYTHES *is about to enter the inner chamber,* CTESIPHON *rushes from it with a bloody dagger, and stops them.*

Ctes. It is accomplished; the foul blot
Is wiped away. Shade of my murder'd father,
Look on thy son, and smile!

Cry. Whose blood is that?
It cannot be the king's!

Ctes. It cannot be!
Think's thou, foul minion of a tyrant's will,
He was to crush, and thou to crawl for ever?
Look there, and tremble!

Cry. Wretch! thy life shall pay
The forfeit of this deed.

[CRYTHES *and* Soldiers *seize* CTESIPHON.

Enter ADRASTUS *mortally wounded, supported by* ION.

Adras. Here let me rest;
In this old chamber did my life begin,
And here I'll end it: CRYTHES! thou hast timed
Thy visit well, to bring thy soldiers hither
To gaze upon my parting.
Cry. To avenge thee;—
Here is the traitor!
Adras. Set him free at once;
Why do ye not obey me? Ctesiphon,
I gave thee cause for this;—believe me now
That thy true steel has made thy vengeance sure;
And as we now stand equal, I will sue
For a small boon—let me not see thee more.
Ctes. Farewell! [*Exit* CTESIPHON.
Adras. [*to* CRYTHES *and the* Soldiers]. Why do ye tarry here?
Begone!—still do ye hover round my couch!
If the commandment of a dying king
Is feeble, as a man who has embraced
His child for the first time since infancy,
And presently must part with him for ever,
I do adjure ye leave us!
[*Exeunt all but* ION *and* ADRASTUS.
Ion. O my father!
How is it with thee now?
Adras. Well; very well;—
Avenging Fate hath spent its utmost force
Against me; and I gaze upon my son
With the sweet certainty that nought can part us
Till all is quiet here. How like a dream
Seems the succession of my regal pomps
Since I embraced my new-born child! To
The interval hath been a weary one:
How hath it pass'd with thee?
Ion. But that my heart
Hath sometimes ached for the sweet sense of kindred,
I had enjoy'd a round of happy years
As cherish'd *youth e'er* knew.
Adras. I bless the gods

That they have strewn along thy humble path
Delights unblamed; and in this hour I seem
Even as I had lived so; and I feel
That I shall live in thee, unless that curse—
Oh, if it should survive me!
Ion. Think not of it;
The gods have shed such sweetness in this moment,
That, howsoe'er they deal with me hereafter,
I shall not deem them angry. Let me call
For help to staunch thy wound; thou art strong yet,
And yet may live to bless me.
Adras. Do not stir;
My strength is ebbing fast; yet as it leaves me,
The spirit of my stainless days of love
Awakens; and their images of joy,
Which at thy voice started from blank oblivion,
When thou wert strange to me, and then half-shown
Look'd sadly through the mist of guilty years.
Now glimmer on me in the lovely light
Which at thy age they wore. Thou art all thy mother's,
Her elements of gentlest virtue cast
In mould heroical.
Ion. Thy speech grows fainter;
Can I do nothing for thee?
Adras. Yes:—my son,
Thou art the best, the bravest of a race
Of rightful monarchs; thou must mount the throne
Thy ancestors have fill'd, and by great deeds
Efface the memory of thy fated sire,
And win the blessing of the gods for men
Stricken for him. Swear to me thou wilt do this,
And I shall die forgiven.
Ion. I will.
Adras. Rejoice,
Sufferers of Argos! I am growing weak,
And my eyes dazzle; let me rest my hands,
Ere they have lost their feeling, on thy head.—
So! So!—thy hair is glossy to the touch
As when I last enwreath'd its tiny curl
About my finger; I did image then

What have I promised him? To meet the men
Who from my living head would strip the crown,
And sit in judgment on me?—I must do it—
Yet shall my band be ready to o'erawe
The course of liberal speech, and if it rise
So as too loudly to offend my ear,
Strike the rash brawler dead?—What idle dream
Of long-past days had melted me? It fades—
It vanishes—I am again a king!

SCENE II.—*The Interior of the Temple.*

Same as ACT I. SCENE I.

CLEMANTHE *seated*—HABRA *attending her.*

Habra. Look, dearest lady!—the thin smoke aspires
In the calm air, as when in happier times
It show'd the gods propitious: wilt thou seek
Thy chamber, lest thy father and his friends,
Returning, find us hinderers of their council?
She answers not—she hearkens not—with joy
Could I believe her, for the first time sullen!
Still she is rapt.

Enter AGENOR.

O speak to my sweet mistress;
Haply thy voice may rouse her.
Age. Dear Clemanthe,
Hope dawns in every omen; we shall taste
Our household joys again.

Enter MEDON, CLEON, TIMOCLES, *and others.*

Me. Clemanthe here!
How sad! how pale!
Habra. Her eye is kindling—hush!
Cle. Hark! hear ye not a distant footstep?
Me. No.
Look round, my fairest child; thy friends are near thee.
Cle. Yes!—now 'tis lost—'tis on that endless stair—
Nearer and more distinct—'tis his—'tis his—
He lives! he comes!

Uncheer'd by action coldly dallies with
Till it begins to shiver! Long ere this,
If Ion's hand be firm, the deed is past,
And yet no shout announces that the bonds
Of tyranny are broken. [*Shouts at a distance.*
Hark! 'tis done!

Enter CTESIPHON.

All hail, my brother freeman?—art not so?—
Thy looks are haggard—is the tyrant slain?
Is liberty achieved?

Ctes. The king is dead;
This arm—I bless the righteous Furies!—slew him.

Pho. Did Ion quail, then?

Ctes. Ion!—Clothe thy speech
In phrase more courtly; he is King of Argos,
Accepted as the tyrant's son, and reigns.

Pho. It cannot be; I can believe him born
Of such high lineage; yet he will not change
His own rich treasury of unruffled thoughts
For all the frigid glories that invest
The loveless state in which the monarch dwells
A terror and a slave. [*Shouts again.*

Ctes. Dost hear that shout?
Tis raised for him!—the craven-hearted world
Is ever eager thus to hail a master,
And patriots smite for it in vain. Our Soldiers,
In the gay recklessness of men who sport
With life as with a plaything; Citizens
On wretched beds gaping for show; and Sages,
Vain of a royal sophist, madly join
In humble prayer that he would deign to tread
Upon their necks; and he is pleased to grant it.

Pho. He shall not grant it! If my life, my sense,
My heart's affections, and my tongue's free scope
Wait the dominion of a mortal will,
What is the sound to me, whether my soul
Bears "Ion" or "Adrastus" burnt within it
As my soul's owner? Ion tyrant? No!
Grant me a moment's pleading with his heart,

Which has not known a selfish throb till now,
And thou shalt see him smile this greatness from him.
Ctes. Go teach the eagle when in azure heaven
He upward darts to seize his madden'd prey,
Shivering through the death-circle of its fear,
To pause and let it 'scape, and thou mayst win
Man to forego the sparkling round of power,
When it floats airily within his grasp!
Pho. Why thus severe? Our nature's common wrongs
Affect thee not; and that which touch'd thee nearly
Is well avenged.
Ctes. Not while the son of him
Who smote my father reigns! I little guess'd
Thou wouldst require a prompter to awake
The memory of the oath so freshly sworn,
Or of the place assigned to thee by lot,
Should our first champion fail to crush the race—
Mark me!—"the race" of him my arm has dealt with.
Now is the time, the palace all confused,
And Ion dizzy with strange turns of fortune,
To do thy part.
Pho. Have mercy on my weakness!
If thou hadst known this comrade of my sports,
One of the same small household whom his mirth
Unfailing gladden'd;—if a thousand times
Thou hadst, by strong prosperity made thoughtless,
Touch'd its unfather'd nature in its nerve
Of agony, and felt no chiding glance;—
Hadst thou beheld him overtax his strength
To serve the wish his genial instinct guess'd,
Till his dim smile the weariness betray'd,
Which it would fain dissemble; hadst thou known
In sickness the sweet magic of his care,
Thou couldst not ask it.—Hear me, Ctesiphon!—
I had a deadly fever once, and slaves
Fled me: he watch'd, and glided to my bed,
And sooth'd my dull ear with discourse which grew
By nice degrees to ravishment, till pain
Seem'd an heroic sense, which made me kin
To *the great deeds he* pictured, and the brood

Of dizzy weakness flickering through the gloom
Of my small curtain'd prison caught the hues
Of beauty spangling out in glorious change;
And it became a luxury to lie
And faintly listen. Canst thou bid me slay him?
Ctes. The deed be mine. Thou'lt not betray me?
[*Going.*
Pho. Hold!
If by our dreadful compact he must fall,
I will not smite him with my coward thought
Winging a distant arm; I will confront him
Arm'd with delicious memories of our youth,
And pierce him through them all.
Ctes. Be speedy, then!
Pho. Fear not that I shall prove a laggard, charged
With weight of such a purpose.—Fate commands,
And I live now but to perform her bidding.
[*Exeunt severally.*

SCENE III.—*A Terrace in the Garden of the Palace, by Moonlight.*

Enter ION *and* AGENOR.

Age. Wilt thou not seek repose?
Ion. My rest is here—
Beneath the greatness of the heavens, which awes
My spirit, toss'd by sudden change, and torn
By various passions, to repose. Yet age
Requires more genial nourishment—pray seek it—
I will but stay thee to inquire once more
If any symptom of returning health
Bless the wan city?
Age. No—the perishing
Lift up their painful heads to bless thy name,
And their eyes kindle as they utter it;
But still they perish.
Ion. So!—give instant order,
The rites which shall confirm me in my throne
Be solemnized to-morrow.

Age. How! so soon,
While the more sacred duties to the dead
Remain unpaid?
Ion. Let them abide my time—
They will not tarry long. I see thee gaze
With wonder on me—do my bidding now,
And trust me till to-morrow. Pray go in,
The night will chill thee else.
Age. Farewell, my lord. [*Exit.*
Ion. Now all is stillness in my breast—how soon
To be displaced by more profound repose,
In which no thread of consciousness shall live
To feel how calm it is!—O lamp serene,
Do I lift up to thee undazzled eyes
For the last time? Shall I enjoy no more
Thy golden haziness which seemed akin
To my young fortune's dim felicity?
And when it coldly shall embrace the urn
That shall contain my ashes, will no thought
Of all the sweet ones cherish'd by thy beams
Awake to tremble with them? Vain regret!
The pathway of my duty lies in sunlight,
And I would tread it with as firm a step,
Though it should terminate in cold oblivion,
As if Elysian pleasures at its close
Flash'd palpable to sight as things of earth.
Who passes there?

Enter PHOCION *behind, who strikes at* ION *with a dagger.*

Pho. This to the king of Argos!
[ION *struggles with him, seizes the dagger which he throws away.*
Ion. I will not fall by thee, poor wavering novice
In the assassin's trade!—thy arm is feeble—
[*He confronts* PHOCION.
Phocion!—was this well aim'd? thou didst not mean—
Pho. I meant to take thy life, urged by remembrance
Of yesterday's great vow.
Ion. And couldst thou think
I had forgotten?
Pho. *Thou?*

Ion. Couldst thou believe,
That one, whose nature had been arm'd to stop
The life-blood's current in a fellow's veins,
Would hesitate when gentler duty turn'd
His steel to nearer use? To-morrow's dawn
Shall see me wield the sceptre of my fathers:
Come, watch beside my throne, and, if I fail
In sternest duty which my country needs,
My bosom will be open to thy steel,
As now to thy embrace!

Pho. Thus let me fall
Low at thy feet, and kneeling here receive
Forgiveness; do not crush me with more love
Than lies in the word "pardon."

Ion. And that word
I will not speak;—what have I to forgive?
A devious fancy, and a muscle raised
Obedient to its impulse! Dost thou think
The tracings of a thousand kindnesses,
Which taught me all I guess'd of brotherhood,
And in the rashness of a moment lost?

Pho. I cannot look upon thee; let me go,
And lose myself in darkness.

Ion. Nay, old playmate,
We part not thus—the duties of my state
Will shortly end our fellowship; but spend
A few sweet minutes with me. Dost remember
How in a night like this we climb'd yon walls—
Two vagrant urchins, and with tremulous joy
Skimm'd through these statue-border'd walks that gleam'd
In bright succession? Let us tread them now;
And think we are but older by a day,
And that the pleasant walk of yesternight
We are to-night re-tracing. Come, my friend!—
What, drooping yet! thou wert not wont to seem
So stubborn—cheerily, my Phocion—come! [*Exeunt.*

ACT V.

SCENE I.—*Time—The Morning of the second day. The Terrace of the Palace.*

Two Soldiers *on guard.*

1 *Sold.* A stirring season, comrade! our new prince
Has leap'd as eagerly into his seat
As he had languish'd an expectant heir
Weary of nature's kindness to old age.
He was esteem'd a modest stripling;—strange
That he should, with such reckless hurry, seize
The gaudy shows of power!
2 *Sold.* 'Tis honest nature;
The royal instinct was but smouldering in him,
And now it blazes forth. I pray the gods
He may not give us cause to mourn his sire.
1 *Sold.* No more; he comes.

Enter ION.

Ion. Why do ye loiter here;
Are all the statues deck'd with festal wreaths
As I commanded?
1 *Sold.* We have been on guard
Here by Agenor's order since the nightfall.
Ion. On guard! Well, hasten now and see it done;
I need no guards. [*Exeunt* Soldiers.
The awful hour draws near;
I think that I can meet it.—Phocion comes:
He will unman me; yet he must not go,
Thinking his presence painful.

Enter PHOCION.

Friend, good morrow;
Thou play'st the courtier early.
Pho. Canst thou speak
In that old tone of common cheerfulness,
That blithely promises delightful years,
And hold thy dreadful purpose?

Ion. I have drawn
From the selectest fountain of repose
A blessed calm:—when I lay down to rest,
I fear'd lest bright remembrances of childhood
Should with untimely visitation mock me;
But deep and dreamless have my slumbers been.
If sight of thee renews the thoughts of life
Too busily,—I prize the love that wakes them.
Pho. Oh, cherish them, and let them plead with thee
To grant my prayer,—that thou wouldst live for Argos,
Not die for her;—thy gracious life shall win
More than thy death the favour of the gods,
And charm the marble aspect of grim Fate
Into a blessed change: I, who am vow'd,
And who so late was arm'd Fate's minister,
Implore thee!
Ion. Speak to me no more of life!
There is a dearer name I would recall—
Thou understand'st me—

Enter AGENOR.

Age. Thou hast forgot to name
Who shall be bidden to this evening's feast.
Ion. The feast! most true; I had forgotten it.
Bid whom thou wilt; but let there be large store,
If our sad walls contain it, for the wretched
Whom hunger palsies. It may be few else
Will taste it with a relish. [*Exit* AGENOR.

[ION *resumes his address to* PHOCION, *and continues it broken by the interruptions which follow.*

I would speak
A word of her who yester-morning rose
To her light duties with as blithe a heart
As ever yet its equal beating veil'd
In moveless alabaster;—plighted now,
In liberal hour, to one whose destiny
Shall freeze the sources of enjoyment in it,
And make it heavy with the life-long pang
A widow'd spirit bears!—

Enter CLEON.

Cleon. The heralds wait
To learn the hour at which the solemn games
Shall be proclaim'd.
Ion. The games!—yes, I remember
That sorrow's darkest pageantries give place
To youth's robustest pastimes—Death and life
Embracing:—at the hour of noon.
Cleon. The wrestlers
Pray thee to crown the victor.
Ion. If I live,
Their wish shall govern me. [*Exit* CLEON.
Could I recall
One hour, and bid thy sister think of me
With gentle sorrow, as a playmate lost,
I should escape the guilt of having stopp'd
The pulse of hope in the most innocent soul
That ever passion ruffled. Do not talk
Of me as I shall seem to thy kind thoughts,
But harshly as thou canst; and if thou steal
From thy rich store of popular eloquence
Some bitter charge against the faith of kings,
'Twill be an honest treason.

Enter CASSANDER.

Cas. Pardon me,
If I entreat thee to permit a few
Of thy once-cherish'd friends to bid thee joy
Of that which swells their pride.
Ion. They'll madden me.
Dost thou not see me circled round with care?
Urge me no more.
[*As* CASSANDER *is going*, ION *leaves* PHOCION *and comes to him.*
Come back, Cassander! see
How greatness frets the temper. Keep this ring—
It may remind thee of the pleasant hours
That we have spent together, ere our fortunes
Grew separate; and with thy gracious speech
Excuse me *to our friends.* [Exit CASSANDER.

Pho. 'Tis time we seek
The temple.
Ion. Phocion! must I seek the temple?
Pho. There sacrificial rites must be perform'd
Before thou art enthroned.
Ion. Then I must gaze
On things which will arouse the struggling thoughts
I had subdued—perchance may meet with her
Whose name I dare not utter. I am ready. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.—*The Temple.*

CLEMANTHE, HABRA.

Hab. Be comforted, dear lady;—he must come
To sacrifice.
Cle. Recall that churlish word,
That stubborn "*must*," that bounds my living hopes,
As with an iron circle. He *must* come!
How piteous is affection's state, that cleaves
To such a wretched prop! I had flown to him
Long before this, but that I fear'd my presence
Might prove a burthen,—and he sends no word,
No token that he thinks of me! Art sure
That he *must* come? The hope has torture in it;
Yet it is all my bankrupt heart hath left
To feed upon.
Hab. I see him now with Phocion
Pass through the inner court.
Cle. He will not come
This way, then, to the place for sacrifice.
I can endure no more: speed to him, Habra;
And bid him, if he holds Clemanthe's life
Worthy a minute's loss, to seek me here.
Hab. Dear lady!—
Cle. Do not answer me, but run,
Or I shall give yon crowd of sycophants
To gaze upon my sorrow. [*Exit* HABRA.
It is hard;
Yet I must strive to bear it, and find solace
In that high fortune which has made him strange.

He bends this way—but slowly—mournfully.
O, he is ill; how has my slander wrong'd him!

Enter ION.

Ion. What wouldst thou with me, lady?
Cle. Is it so?
Nothing, my lord, save to implore thy pardon,
That the departing gleams of a bright dream,
From which I scarce had waken'd, made me bold
To crave a word with thee;—but all are fled—
And I have nought to seek.
Ion. A goodly dream;
But thou art right to think it was no more,
And study to forget it.
Cle. To forget it?
Indeed, my lord, I cannot wish to lose
What, being past, is all my future hath,
All I shall live for: do not grudge me this,
The brief space I shall need it.
Ion. Speak not, fair one,
In tone so mournful, for it makes me feel
Too sensibly the hapless wretch I am,
That troubled the deep quiet of thy soul
In that pure fountain which reflected heaven,
For a brief taste of rapture.
Cle. Dost thou yet
Esteem it rapture, then? My foolish heart,
Be still! Yet wherefore should a crown divide us?
O, my dear Ion!—let me call thee so
This once at least—it could not in my thoughts
Increase the distance that there was between us,
When, rich in spirit, thou to strangers' eyes
Seem'd a poor foundling.
Ion. It must separate us!
Think it no harmless bauble, but a curse
Will freeze the current in the veins of youth,
And from familiar touch of genial hand,
From household pleasures, from sweet daily tasks,
From airy thought, free wanderer of the heavens,
For ever *banish me!*

Cle. Thou dost accuse
Thy state too hardly. It may give some room,
Some little space, amidst its radiant folds,
For love to make its nest in!
Ion. Not for me:
My pomp must be most lonesome, far removed
From that sweet fellowship of human kind
The slave rejoices in: my solemn robes
Shall wrap me as a panoply of ice,
And the attendants who may throng around me
Shall want the flatteries which may basely warm
The sceptre'd thing they circle. Dark and cold
Stretches the path, which when I wear the crown,
I needs must enter:—the great gods forbid
That thou shouldst follow in it!
Cle. O unkind!
And shall we never see each other?
Ion. (*after a pause*). Yes!
I have ask'd that dreadful question of the hills
That look eternal; of the flowing streams
That lucid flow for ever; of the stars,
Amid whose fields of azure my raised spirit
Hath trod in glory: all were dumb; but now,
While I thus gaze upon thy living face,
I feel the love that kindles through its beauty
Can never wholly perish; we *shall* meet
Again, Clemanthe!
Cle. Bless thee for that name;
Call me that name again; thy words sound strangely,
Yet they breathe kindness. Shall we meet indeed?
Think not I would intrude upon thy cares,
Thy councils, or thy pomps;—to sit at distance,
To weave with the nice labour which preserves
The rebel pulses even from gay threads
Faint records of thy deeds, and sometimes catch
The falling music of a gracious word,
Or the stray sunshine of a smile, will be
Comfort enough:—do not deny me this;
Or if stern fate compel thee to deny,
Kill me at once!

Ion. No: thou must live, my fair one:
There are a thousand joyous things in life,
Which pass unheeded in a life of joy
As thine hath been, till breezy sorrow comes
To ruffle it; and daily duties paid
Hardly at first, at length will bring repose
To the sad mind that studies to perform them.
Thou dost not mark me.

Cle. Oh, I do! I do!

Ion. If for thy brother's and thy father's sake
Thou art content to live the healer, Time,
Will reconcile thee to the lovely things
Of this delightful world,—and if another,
A happier—no, I cannot bid thee love
Another!—I did think I could have said it,
But 'tis in vain.

Cle. Thou art mine own then still?

Ion. I am thine own! thus let me clasp thee; nearer—
O joy too thrilling and too short!

Enter AGENOR.

Age. My lord,
The sacrificial rites await thy presence.

Ion. I come.—One more embrace—the last, the last,
In this world! Now, farewell! [*Exit.*

Cle. The last embrace!
Then he has cast me off! No, 'tis not so;
Some mournful secret of his fate divides us:
I'll struggle to bear that, and snatch a comfort
From seeing him uplifted. I will look
Upon him in his state; Minerva's shrine
Will shelter me from vulgar gaze; I'll hasten,
And feast my sad eyes with his greatness there! [*Exit.*

SCENE III.—*The Great Square of the City,—on one side a Throne of State prepared,—on the other an Altar,—the Statues decorated with garlands.*

Enter CTESIPHON *and* CASSANDER.

Ctes. Vex me no more by telling me, Cassander,
If *his fair speech:* I prize it at its worth;

Thou'lt see how he will act when seated firm
Upon the throne the craven tyrant fill'd,
Whose blood he boasts, unless some honest arm
Should shed it first.

Cas. Hast thou forgot the time
When thou thyself wert eager to foretell
His manhood's glory from his childish virtues?
Let me not think thee one of those fond prophets,
Who are well pleased still to foretell success,
So it remain their dream.

Ctes. Thou dost forget
What has chill'd fancy and delight within me—
[*Music at a distance.*
Hark!—servile trumpets speak his coming—watch
How power will change him. [*They stand aside.*

[*The Procession. Enter* MEDON, AGENOR, PHOCION, TIMOCLES, CLEON, Sages *and* People; ION *last, in Royal robes. He advances amidst shouts, and speaks.*

Ion. I thank you for your greeting—Shout no more,
But in deep silence raise your hearts to Heaven,
That it may strengthen one so young and frail
As I am, for the business of this hour.
Must I sit here?

Me. Permit thy earliest friend,
Who propp'd in infancy thy tottering steps,
To lead thee to thy throne,—and thus fulfil
His fondest vision.

Ion. Thou art still most kind—

Me. Nay, do not think of me, my son! my son!
What ails thee? When thou shouldst reflect the joy
Of Argos, the strange paleness of the grave
Marbles thy face.

Ion. Am I indeed so pale?
It is a solemn office I assume;
Yet thus, with Phœbus' blessing I embrace it.
[*Sits on the throne.*
Stand forth, Agenor!

Age. I wait thy will.

Ion. To thee I look as to the wisest friend
Of this afflicted people;—thou must leave

Awhile the quiet which thy life hath earn'd,
To rule our councils; fill the seats of justice
With good men not so absolute in goodness,
As to forget what human frailty is;
And order my sad country.
Age. Pardon me—
Ion. Nay, I will promise 'tis my last request;
Thou never couldst deny me what I sought
In boyish wantonness, and shalt not grudge
Thy wisdom to me, till our state revive
From its long anguish;—it will not be long
If Heaven approve me here. Thou hast all power
Whether I live or die.
Age. Die! I am old—
Ion. Death is not jealous of thy mild decay,
Which gently wins thee his; exulting Youth
Provokes the ghastly monarch's sudden stride,
And makes his horrid fingers quick to clasp
His shivering prey at noontide. Let me see
The captain of the guard.
Cry. I kneel to crave
Humbly the favour which thy sire bestow'd
On one who loved him well.
Ion. I cannot thank thee,
That wakest the memory of my father's weakness;
But I will not forget that thou hast shared
The light enjoyments of a noble spirit,
And learn'd the need of luxury. I grant
For thee and thy brave comrades, ample share
Of such rich treasure as my stores contain,
To grace thy passage to some distant land,
Where, if an honest cause engage thy sword,
May glorious laurels wreath it! In our realm
We shall not need it longer.
Cry. Dost intend
To banish the firm troops before whose valour
Barbarian millions shrink appall'd, and leave
Our city naked to the first assault
Of reckless foes!
Ion. No, Crythes!—in ourselves,

In our own honest hearts and chainless hands
Will be our safeguard:—while we seek no use
Of arms, we would not have our children blend
With their first innocent wishes; while the love
Of Argos and of justice shall be one
To their young reason; while their sinews grow
Firm 'midst the gladness of heroic sports:
We shall not ask to guard our country's peace
One selfish passion, or one venal sword.
I would not grieve thee;—but thy valiant troop—
For I esteem them valiant—must no more
With luxury which suits a desperate camp
Infect us. See that they embark, Agenor,
Ere night.

Cry. My lord—

Ion. No more—my word hath pass'd
Medon, there is no office I can add
To those thou hast grown old in; thou wilt guard
The shrine of Phœbus, and within thy home—
Thy too delightful home—befriend the stranger
As thou didst me;—there sometimes waste a thought
On thy spoil'd inmate!

Me. Think of thee, my lord?
Long shall we triumph in thy glorious reign—

Ion. Prithee no more. Argives! I have a boon
To crave of you—whene'er I shall rejoin
In death the father from whose heart in life
Stern Fate divided me, think gently of him!
For ye, who saw him in his full-blown pride,
Knew little of affections crush'd within,
And wrongs which frenzied him; yet never more
Let the great interests of the state depend
Upon the thousand chances that may sway
A piece of human frailty! Swear to me
That ye will seek hereafter in yourselves
The means of sovereign rule:—our narrow space,
So happy in its confines, so compact,
Needs not the magic of a single name
Which wider regions may require to draw
Their interests into one; but circled thus,

Age. How! so soon,
While the more sacred duties to the dead
Remain unpaid?
Ion. Let them abide my time—
They will not tarry long. I see thee gaze
With wonder on me—do my bidding now,
And trust me till to-morrow. Pray go in,
The night will chill thee else.
Age. Farewell, my lord. [*Exit.*
Ion. Now all is stillness in my breast—how soon
To be displaced by more profound repose,
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[ION *struggles with him, seizes the dagger which he throws away.*
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In the assassin's trade!—thy arm is feeble—
[*He confronts* PHOCION.
Phocion!—was this well aim'd? thou didst not mean—
Pho. I meant to take thy life, urged by remembrance
Of yesterday's great vow.
Ion. And couldst thou think
I had forgotten?
Pho. Thou?

And made me feel how evil is the wish
Of vengeance. Could I die to save thee!

CLEMANTHE *rushes forward.*

Cle. Hold!
Let me support him—stand away—indeed.—
I have best right, although ye know it not,
To cling to him in death.
Ion. This is a joy
I did not hope for—this is sweet indeed—
Bend thine eyes on me!
Cle. And for this it was
Thou wouldst have wean'd me from thee? Couldst thou [think
I would be so divorced?
Ion. Thou art right, Clemanthe,—
It was a shallow and an idle thought;
'Tis past; no show of coldness frets us now;
No vain disguise, my love. Yet thou wilt think
On that which, when I feign'd I truly said—
Wilt thou not, sweet one?
Cle. I will treasure all.

Enter IRUS.

Irus. I bring you glorious tidings——Ha! no joy
Can enter here.
Ion. Yes—is it as I hope?
Irus. The pestilence abates.
Ion. [*springs on his feet*]. Do ye not hear!
Why shout ye not?—ye are strong—think not of me;
Hearken! the curse my ancestry has spread
O'er Argos is dispell'd—Agenor, give
This gentle youth his freedom, who hath brought
Sweet tidings that I shall not die in vain—
And Medon! cherish him as thou hast one
Who dying blesses thee;—my own Clemanthe!
Let this console thee also—Argos lives—
The offering is accepted—all is well! [*Dies.*

The curtain falls.

THE

ATHENIAN CAPTIVE:

A TRAGEDY, IN FIVE ACTS.

TO THE

RIGHT HON. THOMAS LORD DENMAN,

Lord Chief Justice of Her Majesty's Court of Queen's Bench.

IN TESTIMONY OF WARM ADMIRATION

OF THOSE QUALITIES WHICH WERE THE GRACE AND DELIGHT OF THE BAR,

AND WHICH HAPPILY ADORN THE BENCH;

AND IN GRATEFUL REMEMBRANCE OF MANY CHEERING KINDNESSES;

This Tragedy

IS, WITH HIS PERMISSION,

RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED

BY

THE AUTHOR.

Enter CLEON.

Cleon. The heralds wait
To learn the hour at which the solemn games
Shall be proclaim'd.
Ion. The games!—yes, I remember
That sorrow's darkest pageantries give place
To youth's robustest pastimes—Death and life
Embracing:—at the hour of noon.
Cleon. The wrestlers
Pray thee to crown the victor.
Ion. If I live,
Their wish shall govern me. [*Exit* CLEON.
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One hour, and bid thy sister think of me
With gentle sorrow, as a playmate lost,
I should escape the guilt of having stopp'd
The pulse of hope in the most innocent soul
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Dost thou not see me circled round with care?
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Come back, Cassander! see
How greatness frets the temper. Keep this ring—
It may remind thee of the pleasant hours
That we have spent together, ere our fortunes
Grew separate; and with thy gracious speech
Excuse *me to our friends.* [*Exit* CASSANDER.

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Before thou art enthroned.
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On things which will arouse the struggling thoughts
I had subdued—perchance may meet with her
Whose name I dare not utter. I am ready. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.—*The Temple.*

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Hab. Be comforted, dear lady;—he must come
To sacrifice.
Cle. Recall that churlish word,
That stubborn "*must*," that bounds my living hopes,
As with an iron circle. He *must* come!
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Yet it is all my bankrupt heart hath left
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Worthy a minute's loss, to seek me here.
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Cle. Do not answer me, but run,
Or I shall give yon crowd of sycophants
To gaze upon my sorrow. [*Exit* HABRA.
It is hard;
Yet I must strive to bear it, and find solace
In that high fortune which has made him strange.

He bends this way—but slowly—mournfully.
O, he is ill; how has my slander wrong'd him!

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Ion. What wouldst thou with me, lady?
Cle. Is it so?
Nothing, my lord, save to implore thy pardon,
That the departing gleams of a bright dream,
From which I scarce had waken'd, made me bold
To crave a word with thee;—but all are fled—
And I have nought to seek.
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But thou art right to think it was no more,
And study to forget it.
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Esteem it rapture, then? My foolish heart,
Be still! Yet wherefore should a crown divide us?
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Stretches the path, which when I wear the crown,
I needs must enter:—the great gods forbid
That thou shouldst follow in it!
Cle. O unkind!
And shall we never see each other?
Ion. (*after a pause*). Yes!
I have ask'd that dreadful question of the hills
That look eternal; of the flowing streams
That lucid flow for ever; of the stars,
Amid whose fields of azure my raised spirit
Hath trod in glory: all were dumb; but now,
While I thus gaze upon thy living face,
I feel the love that kindles through its beauty
Can never wholly perish; we *shall* meet
Again, Clemanthe!
Cle. Bless thee for that name;
Call me that name again; thy words sound strangely,
Yet they breathe kindness. Shall we meet indeed?
Think not I would intrude upon thy cares,
Thy councils, or thy pomps;—to sit at distance,
To weave with the nice labour which preserves
The rebel pulses even from gay threads
Faint records of thy deeds, and sometimes catch
The falling music of a gracious word,
Or the stray sunshine of a smile, will be
Comfort enough:—do not deny me this;
Or if stern fate compel thee to deny,
Kill me at once!

Ion. No: thou must live, my fair one:
There are a thousand joyous things in life,
Which pass unheeded in a life of joy
As thine hath been, till breezy sorrow comes
To ruffle it; and daily duties paid
Hardly at first, at length will bring repose
To the sad mind that studies to perform them.
Thou dost not mark me.

Cle. Oh, I do! I do!

Ion. If for thy brother's and thy father's sake
Thou art content to live the healer, Time,
Will reconcile thee to the lovely things
Of this delightful world,—and if another,
A happier—no, I cannot bid thee love
Another!—I did think I could have said it,
But 'tis in vain.

Cle. Thou art mine own then still?

Ion. I am thine own! thus let me clasp thee; nearer—
O joy too thrilling and too short!

Enter AGENOR.

Age. My lord,
The sacrificial rites await thy presence.

Ion. I come.—One more embrace—the last, the last,
In this world! Now, farewell! [*Exit.*

Cle. The last embrace!
Then he has cast me off! No, 'tis not so;
Some mournful secret of his fate divides us:
I'll struggle to bear that, and snatch a comfort
From seeing him uplifted. I will look
Upon him in his state; Minerva's shrine
Will shelter me from vulgar gaze; I'll hasten,
And feast my sad eyes with his greatness there! [*Exit.*

SCENE III.—*The Great Square of the City,—on one side a Throne of State prepared,—on the other an Altar,—the Statues decorated with garlands.*

Enter CTESIPHON *and* CASSANDER.

Ctes. Vex me no more by telling me, Cassander,
If *his fair speech*: I prize it at its worth;

Thou'lt see how he will act when seated firm
Upon the throne the craven tyrant fill'd,
Whose blood he boasts, unless some honest arm
Should shed it first.

Cas. Hast thou forgot the time
When thou thyself wert eager to foretell
His manhood's glory from his childish virtues?
Let me not think thee one of those fond prophets,
Who are well pleased still to foretell success,
So it remain their dream.

Ctes. Thou dost forget
What has chill'd fancy and delight within me—
[*Music at a distance.*
Hark!—servile trumpets speak his coming—watch
How power will change him. [*They stand aside.*

[*The Procession. Enter* MEDON, AGENOR, PHOCION, TIMOCLES, CLEON, Sages *and* People; ION *last, in Royal robes. He advances amidst shouts, and speaks.*

Ion. I thank you for your greeting—Shout no more,
But in deep silence raise your hearts to Heaven,
That it may strengthen one so young and frail
As I am, for the business of this hour.
Must I sit here?

Me. Permit thy earliest friend,
Who propp'd in infancy thy tottering steps,
To lead thee to thy throne,—and thus fulfil
His fondest vision.

Ion. Thou art still most kind—

Me. Nay, do not think of me, my son! my son!
What ails thee? When thou shouldst reflect the joy
Of Argos, the strange paleness of the grave
Marbles thy face.

Ion. Am I indeed so pale?
It is a solemn office I assume;
Yet thus, with Phœbus' blessing I embrace it.
[*Sits on the throne.*
Stand forth, Agenor!

Age. I wait thy will.

Ion. To thee I look as to the wisest friend
Of this afflicted people;—thou must leave

Awhile the quiet which thy life hath earn'd,
To rule our councils; fill the seats of justice
With good men not so absolute in goodness,
As to forget what human frailty is;
And order my sad country.
Age. Pardon me—
Ion. Nay, I will promise 'tis my last request;
Thou never couldst deny me what I sought
In boyish wantonness, and shalt not grudge
Thy wisdom to me, till our state revive
From its long anguish;—it will not be long
If Heaven approve me here. Thou hast all power
Whether I live or die.
Age. Die! I am old—
Ion. Death is not jealous of thy mild decay,
Which gently wins thee his; exulting Youth
Provokes the ghastly monarch's sudden stride,
And makes his horrid fingers quick to clasp
His shivering prey at noontide. Let me see
The captain of the guard.
Cry. I kneel to crave
Humbly the favour which thy sire bestow'd
On one who loved him well.
Ion. I cannot thank thee,
That wakest the memory of my father's weakness;
But I will not forget that thou hast shared
The light enjoyments of a noble spirit,
And learn'd the need of luxury. I grant
For thee and thy brave comrades, ample share
Of such rich treasure as my stores contain,
To grace thy passage to some distant land,
Where, if an honest cause engage thy sword,
May glorious laurels wreath it! In our realm
We shall not need it longer.
Cry. Dost intend
To banish the firm troops before whose valour
Barbarian millions shrink appall'd, and leave
Our city naked to the first assault
Of reckless foes!
Ion. No, Crythes!—in ourselves,

In our own honest hearts and chainless hands
Will be our safeguard:—while we seek no use
Of arms, we would not have our children blend
With their first innocent wishes; while the love
Of Argos and of justice shall be one
To their young reason; while their sinews grow
Firm 'midst the gladness of heroic sports:
We shall not ask to guard our country's peace
One selfish passion, or one venal sword.
I would not grieve thee;—but thy valiant troop—
For I esteem them valiant—must no more
With luxury which suits a desperate camp
Infect us. See that they embark, Agenor,
Ere night.

Cry. My lord—

Ion. No more—my word hath pass'd
Medon, there is no office I can add
To those thou hast grown old in; thou wilt guard
The shrine of Phœbus, and within thy home—
Thy too delightful home—befriend the stranger
As thou didst me;—there sometimes waste a thought
On thy spoil'd inmate!

Me. Think of thee, my lord?
Long shall we triumph in thy glorious reign—

Ion. Prithee no more. Argives! I have a boon
To crave of you—whene'er I shall rejoin
In death the father from whose heart in life
Stern Fate divided me, think gently of him!
For ye, who saw him in his full-blown pride,
Knew little of affections crush'd within,
And wrongs which frenzied him; yet never more
Let the great interests of the state depend
Upon the thousand chances that may sway
A piece of human frailty! Swear to me
That ye will seek hereafter in yourselves
The means of sovereign rule:—our narrow space,
So happy in its confines, so compact,
Needs not the magic of a single name
Which wider regions may require to draw
Their interests into one; but circled thus,

Like a bless'd family by simple laws,
May tenderly be govern'd; all degrees
Moulded together as a single form
Of nymph-like loveliness, which finest chords
Of sympathy pervading shall suffuse
In times of quiet with one bloom, and fill
With one resistless impulse, if the hosts
Of foreign power should threaten. Swear to me
That ye will do this!

Me. Wherefore ask this now?
Thou shalt live long;—the paleness of thy face
Which late appall'd me wears a glory now,
And thine eyes kindle with the prophecy
Of lustrous years.

Ion. The gods approve me then!
Yet I will use the function of a king,
And claim obedience. Promise if I leave
No issue, that the sovereign power shall live
In the affections of the general heart,
And in the wisdom of the best.

Medon, and others. We swear it!

Ion. Hear and record the oath, immortal powers!
Now give me leave a moment to approach
That altar unattended. [*He goes to the altar.*
Gracious gods!
In whose mild service my glad youth was spent,
Look on me now;—and if there is a Power,
As at this solemn time I feel there is,
Beyond ye, that hath breathed through all your shapes
The Spirit of the Beautiful that lives
In earth and heaven; to ye I offer up
This conscious being, full of life and love,
For my dear country's welfare. Let this blow
End all her sorrows!

[*Stabs himself, and falls.* CTESIPHON *rushes to support him.*
Ctesiphon, thou art
Avenged and wilt forgive me.

Ctes. Thou hast pluck'd
The poor disguise of hatred from my soul,

And made me feel how evil is the wish
Of vengeance. Could I die to save thee!

CLEMANTHE *rushes forward.*

Cle. Hold!
Let me support him—stand away—indeed.—
I have best right, although ye know it not,
To cling to him in death.
Ion. This is a joy
I did not hope for—this is sweet indeed—
Bend thine eyes on me!
Cle. And for this it was
Thou wouldst have wean'd me from thee? Couldst thou [think
I would be so divorced?
Ion. Thou art right, Clemanthe,—
It was a shallow and an idle thought;
'Tis past; no show of coldness frets us now;
No vain disguise, my love. Yet thou wilt think
On that which, when I feign'd I truly said—
Wilt thou not, sweet one?
Cle. I will treasure all.

Enter IRUS.

Irus. I bring you glorious tidings——Ha! no joy
Can enter here.
Ion. Yes—is it as I hope?
Irus. The pestilence abates.
Ion. [*springs on his feet*]. Do ye not hear!
Why shout ye not?—ye are strong—think not of me;
Hearken! the curse my ancestry has spread
O'er Argos is dispell'd—Agenor, give
This gentle youth his freedom, who hath brought
Sweet tidings that I shall not die in vain—
And Medon! cherish him as thou hast one
Who dying blesses thee;—my own Clemanthe!
Let this console thee also—Argos lives—
The offering is accepted—all is well! [*Dies.*

The curtain falls.

THE

ATHENIAN CAPTIVE:

A TRAGEDY, IN FIVE ACTS.

TO THE

RIGHT HON. THOMAS LORD DENMAN,

Lord Chief Justice of Her Majesty's Court of Queen's Bench.

IN TESTIMONY OF WARM ADMIRATION

OF THOSE QUALITIES WHICH WERE THE GRACE AND DELIGHT OF THE BAR,

AND WHICH HAPPILY ADORN THE BENCH;

AND IN GRATEFUL REMEMBRANCE OF MANY CHEERING KINDNESSES;

This Tragedy

IS, WITH HIS PERMISSION,

RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED

BY

THE AUTHOR.

PREFACE.

THE following notice was prefixed to the first edition of this drama, which was prepared in the expectation that it would be performed on the eve of its publication :—

" The existence of the following scenes is entirely to be attributed to the earnest desire which I felt, to assist, even in the slightest degree, the endeavour which Mr. Macready has made this season in the cause of the acted Drama. More than contented with the unhoped for association I had obtained with the living influences of scenic representation, in the indulgence accorded to 'Ion,' I should have postponed all thought of again venturing before the public, until years had brought leisure, which might enable me to supply, by labour and by care, what I knew to be wanting in the higher requisites of tragic style. But I could not perceive a gentleman, whose friendship I had long enjoyed, forsaking the certain rewards of his art, and the tranquil pleasures of domestic life, to engage in the chivalrous endeavour to support a cause, which I believe to be that of humanity and of goodness, and which seemed almost desperate, without a feverish anxiety to render him assistance, and perhaps a tendency to mistake the will for the power. The position of the two great theatres—with a legal monopoly, which has been frittered away piecemeal without recompense, until nothing remains but the debts which were contracted on the faith of its continuance, and the odium of its name ;—opposed to a competition with numerous establishments, dividing the dramatic talent and dissipating the dramatic interest of the town,—rendered the determination of Mr. Macready to risk his property, his time and his energies, in the management of one of them, a subject of an interest almost painful. Impressed with this sentiment, at a time when it was unforeseen that one of the most distinguished of our authors would lend his aid—when no tragic creation of *Knowles* 'cast its shadow before,' with its au-

surance of power and of beauty,—when the noble revivals of Lear and of Coriolanus were only to be guessed at from those of Hamlet and Macbeth,—I determined to make an attempt, marked, I fear, with more zeal than wisdom. Having submitted the outline of this Drama to the friend and artist most interested in the result, and having received his encouragement to proceed, I devoted my little vacation of Christmas to its composition;—and succeeded so far as to finish it before the renewal of other (I can hardly say) severer labours. Whether I may succeed in doing more than thus gratifying my own feelings, and testifying their strength by the effort, is, at this time, doubtful;—but, in no event, shall I regret having made it.

"At this period I can only, of course, imperfectly, estimate the extent of the obligation I shall owe to the performers; but, as no other opportunity may occur, I cannot refrain from thanking them for the zeal and cordiality with which they have thus far supported me. Among them I am happy to find my old and constant friend, Mr. Serle,—who should rather be engaged in embodying his own conceptions than in lending strength to mine. And I cannot refrain from mentioning the sacrifice made to the common cause by Miss Helen Faucit, in consenting to perform a character far beneath the sphere in which she is entitled to move; and which, even when elevated and graced by her, will, I fear, be chiefly noted for her good-nature in accepting it."

The representation of this play at Covent Garden Theatre was prevented by the occurrence of an event "untoward" as regarded the hopes of the author,—an addition to the family of Mrs. Warner, who had prepared to represent *Ismene*. It was subsequently produced at the Haymarket Theatre, under the management of Mr. Webster; and, notwithstanding the diminution of interest caused by its previous publication, was rendered more successful, by the powers of Mr. Macready and Mrs. Warner, than I had ventured to anticipate, even when I expected that they would be supported by Miss Helen Faucit and Mr. Anderson. It has since been repeatedly represented in the country at the instance of Mr. Henry Betty, who has illustrated the part of *Thoas* with energy and grace, which all who recollect the brilliant passages of his father's youth, or who are acquainted with his own modest worth, will rejoice to find ensuring the best rewards which the present condition of the stage allows to its professors.

The catastrophe of this Drama, as originally written, differs from

that with which it now closes,—the death of Thoas by his own hand in the scene of trial. According to the first design, after Ismene had retired from the Temple on the refusal of her son to acquiesce in the condemnation of Hyllus, Thoas, by the aid of the Athenian troops, awes and compels the Corinthians to leave the prisoner with him, and then implores his death from Hyllus, whom he urges to revenge his father;—Hyllus yields;—and accompanying Thoas to the tomb of Creon, there accomplishes the wish of his repentant friend and the revenge of his father. This scheme, involving scenic difficulties, and perhaps more serious danger, was objected to by Mr. Macready, with good reason, and supplied by the present termination. While I have no doubt that, for theatrical purposes, the alteration was judicious, I retain the opinion that the original scheme was more in accordance with the severe spirit of the Grecian Drama of which this Play is a faint shadow; and, therefore, I have placed in the APPENDIX the closing scenes as first written.

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

CREON, King of Corinth.

HYLLUS, Son of Creon.

IPHITUS, Priest of the temple of Jupiter the Avenger, at Corinth.

CALCHAS, an Athenian, living at Corinth.

THOAS, an Athenian Warrior.

PENTHEUS, an Athenian Warrior, his Friend.

LYCUS, Master of the Slaves to the King of Corinth.

Athenian and Corinthian Soldiers, &c.

ISMENE, Queen of Corinth; second wife of Creon.

CREUSA, Daughter of Creon; twin-born of his first wife with Hyllus.

SCENE—*Corinth, and its immediate neighbourhood.*

TIME OF ACTION—*Two days.*

THE

ATHENIAN CAPTIVE;

A TRAGEDY.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*The Acropolis of Corinth.*

CREON *reclining on a bench, beneath open columns*—IPHITUS *a little behind him, in the dress of Augury, watching the flight of birds. The Sea seen far below, in the distance.*

Iph. WHEEL through the ambient air, ye sacred [birds,
In circles still contracting, that aspire
To share the radiance of yon dazzling beams,
And 'midst them float from mortal gaze; ye speak
In no uncertain language to the sons
Of Corinth, that the shames they bear from Athens
Shall speedily be lost in glories won
From insolent battalions, that have borne
Their triumphs to our gates. Rejoice, my king!
Leave mournful contemplation of the dust,
To hail the omen!

Creon. I am so perplex'd
With the faint tracings age's weakness shapes,
That I distinguish not the winged forms
Thou speakest of, from the mists that flicker quick
On eyes which soon must be all dark. To me
No omen can be otherwise than sad!

Iph. Surely, my king—for I will answer thee
Untrembling, as Jove's minister—these signs

Should make thy heart beat proudly; hast not felt
Upon our loftiest eminence the blight
Of that dishonour which alone can slay
The spirit of a people:—seen our fanes
Crowded with suppliants from our wasted fields,
Shrieking for help in vain, and mourn'd the power
Of Athens to convert our cloudless sky,
And the bright sea which circles us, to bounds
Of a great prison? If thy kingly soul
Hath shrunk—as well I know it hath—from shame
Without example in our story, now
Bid it expand, as our beleaguer'd gates
Shall open wide to let our heroes pass,
With brows which glisten to receive the laurel
From their king's hand.

Creon. Perchance to see him die.
O, Iphitus! thy king hath well nigh spent
His store of wealth, of glory, and of power,
Which made him master of the hopes and strengths
Of others! While the haggard Fury waits
To cut the knot which binds his thousand threads
Of lustrous life, and the sad ghost forsakes
The palace of its regal clay, to shrink,
Thin as a beggar's, sceptreless, uncrown'd,
Unheeded, to the throng'd and silent shore
Where flattery soothes not, think'st thou it can draw
A parting comfort from surrounding looks
Of lusty youth, prepar'd, with beaming joy,
To hail a young successor?

Iph. Still thine age
Is green and hopeful; there is nought about thee
To speak of mortal sickness, and unnerve
A soul of noble essence.

Creon. Priest, forbear!
The life that lingers in me is the witness
With which I may not palter. I may seem
To-day to wear the look of yesterday,—
A shrivell'd, doting, peevish, weak old man,
Who may endure some winters more to strip
A leaflet daily from him, till he stands

So bare of happiness, that Death hath scarce
An art to make him nakeder. My soul
Begins its solemn whispers of adieu
To earth's too sweet companionship. Yet, hark!
It is Creusa's footstep; is 't not, priest?
Is not my child approaching us?

Iph. Afar
I see the snowy foldings of a robe
Wave through the column'd avenue; thy sense
Is finer than the impatient ear of youth,
That it should catch the music of a step
So distant and so gentle.

Creon. If thou wert
A father, thou would'st know a father's love
'Mid nature's weakness, for one failing sense
Still finds another sharpen'd to attend
Its finest ministries. Unlike the pomps
That make the dregs of life more bitter, this
Can sweeten even a king's.

[CREUSA *passes across the stage behind* CREON, *bearing offerings.*

She passes on;
So! So! all leave me. Call her, Iphitus,
Though that her duty own no touch of fondness,
I will command her. Am I not her king?
Why dost not call?

Re-enter CREUSA, *who kneels in front to* CREON.

Ah! thou art there, my child;
Methinks my waning sight grows clear, to drink
The perfect picture of thy beauty in;
And I grow gentle—Ah! too gentle, girl—
Wherefore didst pass me by without regard,
Who have scant blessing left save thus to gaze
And listen to thee?

Creusa. Pardon me, my father,
If, bearing offerings to the shrine of Jove
For my sweet brother's safety, anxious thoughts
Clove to him in the battle with a force
Which made its strangest hopes of horror live,
As present things; and, lost in their pursuit,
I heeded not my father.

Creon. In the battle?
Is Hyllus in the combat 'mid those ranks
Of iron? He who hath not rounded yet
His course of generous exercise? I'm weak;
Is that the cause? Is he impatient grown
To put the royal armour on, his sire
Must never wear again? Oh, no! his youth,
In its obedient gentleness, hath been
An infancy prolong'd! It is the Power
Which strikes me with the portents of the grave,
That by the sight of his ensanguined corpse
Would hasten their fulfilment; 'tis well aim'd,
I shall fall cold before it.

Creusa. 'Twas a word,
Dropp'd by the queen in answer to some speech
In which she fancied slight to Athens, roused
His spirit to an ecstacy; he spurn'd
The light accoutrements of mimic war;
Borrow'd a soldier's sword, and, with the troops
Who sallied forth at day-break, sought the field—
Where Jupiter protect him!

Creon. Bid the queen
Here answer to us [*Exit* IPHITUS.
Rarely will she speak,
And calmly, yet her sad and solemn words
Have power to thrill and madden. O my child,
Had not my wayward fancy been enthrall'd
By that Athenian loveliness which shone
From basest vestments, in a form whose grace
Made the cold beauty of Olympus earth's,
And drew me to be traitor to the urn
Which holds thy mother's ashes, I had spent
My age in sweet renewal of my youth
With thought of her who gladden'd it, nor known
The vain endeavour to enforce regard
From one whose heart lies dead amidst the living.

Re-enter IPHITUS.

Creon. Comes the queen hither? Does she mock outbidding?

Iph. At stern Minerva's inmost shrine she kneels,
And with an arm as rigid and as pale
As is the giant statue, clasps the foot
That seems as it would spurn her, yet were stay'd
By the firm suppliant's will. She looks attent
As one who caught fine hint of distant sounds,
Yet none from living intercourse of man
Can pierce that marble solitude. Her face
Upraised, is motionless,—yet while I mark'd it—
As from its fathomless abode a spring
Breaks on the bosom of a sullen lake
And in an instant grows as still,—a hue
Of blackness trembled o'er it; her large eye
Kindled with frightful lustre;—but the shade
Pass'd instant thence; her face resum'd its look
Of stone as deathlike as the aspect pure
Of the great face divine to which it answered.
I durst not speak to her.

Creon. I see it plain;
Her thoughts are with our foes, the blood of Athens
Mantles or freezes in her alien veins;
Let her alone. [*Shouts without.*

Creusa. Hark!—They would never shout
If Hyllus were in peril.

Creon. Were he slain
In dashing back the dusky wall of shields,
Beneath which Athens masks her pride of war,
They would exult and mock the slaughter'd boy
With Pæans.

Creusa. So my brother would have chosen!
[*Shouts renewed.*

Enter Corinthian Soldier.

Soldier. Our foes are driven to their tents, the field
Is ours—

Creon. [*hastily interrupting him*]. What of the prince—my son?
Thou dost avoid his name;—have ye achieved
This noisy triumph with his blood?

Soldier. A wound,
Slight, as *we hope*, hath graced his early valour,

And though it draws some colour from his cheek
Leaves the heart fearless.
Creon. I will well avenge
The faintest breath of sorrow which hath dimm'd
The mirror of his youth. Will he not come?
Why does he linger if his wound is slight,
From the fond arms of him who will avenge it?
Soldier. He comes, my lord.
Creon. Make way there! let me clasp him!

Enter HYLLUS, *pale, as slightly wounded.*

Why does he not embrace me?

[CREUSA *runs to* HYLLUS, *and supports him as he moves towards* CREON.

Creusa. He is faint,
Exhausted, breathless,—bleeding. Lean on me,
[*To* HYLLUS.
And let me lead thee to the king, who pants
To bid his youngest soldier welcome.
Hyl. Nay
'Tis nothing. Silly trembler!—see my limbs
Are pliant, and my sinews docile still. [*Kneels to* CREON.
Kneel with me; pray our father to forgive
The disobedience of his truant son,
His first—oh, may it prove the last!
[CREUSA *kneels with* HYLLUS *to* CREON.
Creon. My son!
Who fancied I was angry?

Enter ISMENE.

[*To* ISMENE] Art thou come,
To gaze upon the perill'd youth, who owes
His wound to thee?
Ism. He utter'd shallow scorn
Of Athens;—which he ne'er will speak again.
Creon. Wouldst dare to curb his speech?
Hyl. Forbear, my father;
The queen says rightly. In that idle mood,
Which youth's excess of happiness makes wanton,
I slighted our illustrious foes, whose arms
Have, with this mild correction, taught my tongue

An apter phrase of modesty, and shown
What generous courage is, which till this day
I dimly guess'd at.
Creon. Canst thou tell his name,
Who impious drew the blood of him who soon—
Too soon, alas!—shall reign in Corinth?
Hyl. One
I'm proud to claim my master in great war;
With whom contesting, I have tasted first
The joy which animates the glorious game
Where fiercest opposition of brave hearts
Makes them to feel their kindred; one who spared me
To grace another fight, the sudden smart
His sword inflicted made me vainly rush
To grapple with him; from his fearful grasp
I sank to earth; as I lay prone in dust,
The broad steel shiv'ring in my eyes, that strove
To keep their steady gaze, I met his glance,
Where pity triumph'd; quickly he return'd
His falchion to its sheath, and with a hand
Frank and sustaining as a brother's palm,
Uprais'd me;—while he whisper'd in mine ear,
"Thou hast dared well, young soldier!" our hot troops
Environ'd him and bore him from the field,
Our army's noblest captive.
Creon. He shall die;
The gen'rous falsehood of thy speech is vain.
Creusa. O no! my brother's words were never false;
The heroic picture proves his truth;—they bring
A gallant prisoner towards us. It is he.

Enter THOAS, *in armour, guarded by Corinthian* Soldiers, *and* LYCUS, *Master of the Slaves.*

Soldier. My lord, we bring the captive, whom we found
In combat with the prince.
Hyl. Say rather, found
Raising that prince whose rashness he chastised
And whom he taught to treat a noble foe.
Creon. [*To the* Soldiers.] Answer to me! Why have
ye brought this man,
Whom the just gods have yielded to atone

For princely blood he shed, in pride of arms?
Remove that helmet.
Thoas. He who stirs to touch
My arms, shall feel a dying warrior's grasp.
I will not doff my helmet till I yield
My neck to your slave's butchery; how soon
That stroke may fall, I care not.
Creusa. [*To* HYLLUS.] Hyllus, speak!
Why thus transfix'd? Wilt thou not speak for him
Who spared a life, which, light perchance to thee,
Is the most precious thing to me on earth?
Thoas. [*To* CREUSA.] Ere I descend to that eternal gloom
Which opens to enfold me, let me bless
The vision that hath cross'd it!
Hyl. [*To* CREON.] If thou slay him,
I will implore the mercy of the sword
To end me too; and, that sad grace withheld,
Will kneel beside his corpse till nature give
Her own dismissal to me.
Ism. [*Speaking slowly to* CREON.] Let him breathe
A slave's ignoble life out here; 'twill prove
The sterner fortune.
Creon. Hearken to me, prisoner!
My boy hath won his choice—immediate death,
Or life-long portion with my slaves.
Thoas. Dost dare
Insult a son of Athens by the doubt
Thy words imply? Wert thou in manhood's prime,
Amidst thy trembling slaves would I avenge
The foul suggestion, with the desperate strength
Of fated valour; but thou art in years,
And I should blush to harm thee;—let me die.
Creusa. O do not fling away thy noble life,
For it is rich in treasures of its own,
Which Fortune cannot touch, and vision'd glories
Shall stream around its bondage.
Thoas. I have dream'd
Indeed of greatness, lovely one, and felt
The very dream worth living for, while hope,
To make it real, survived; and I have lived

To image thought, the mirror of great deeds,
Fed by the past to might which should impel
And vivify the future! blending thus
The aims and triumphs of a hero's life.
But to cheat hopeless infamy with shows
Of nobleness, and filch a feeble joy
In the vain spasms of the slavish soul,
Were foulest treachery to the god within me.
No, lady: from the fissure of a rock,
Scath'd and alone, my brief existence gush'd,
A passion'd torrent;—let it not be lost
In miry sands, but having caught one gleam
Of loveliness to grace it, dash from light
To darkness and to silence. Lead me forth—
[*To* CREUSA]. The Gods requite thee!

Creon. Hath the captive chosen?
I will not grant another moment;—speak!
Wilt serve or perish?

Hyl. [*Throwing himself before* THOAS]. Do not an-
Grant him a few short minutes to decide, [swer yet!
And let me spend them with him.

Creon. [*Rising*]. Be it so, then;
Kneel, prisoner, to the prince who won thee grace
No other mortal could have gain'd:—remember
The master of my slaves attends the word
Thou presently shalt utter; tame thy pride
To own his government, or he must bind,
And slay thee. Daughter, come! The queen attends us.
[*Exeunt* CREON *and* Soldiers.

Creusa. [*To* HYLLUS, *as she passes him*]. Thou wilt not leave him till he softens.

[ISMENE *follows; as she passes* THOAS, *she speaks in a low and solemn tone.*

Ism. Live!

Thoas. Who gave that shameful counsel?

Ism. [*Passing on*]. One of Athens. [*Exit.*

[*Exeunt all but* LYCUS *the Master of the Slaves.*—THOAS, *and* HYLLUS.

Thoas. [*Abstractedly*]. What words are these, which bid my wayward blood,
That centred at my heart with icy firmness,

Come tingling back through all my veins? I seem
Once more to drink Athenian ether in,
And the fair city's column'd glories flash
Upon my soul!
Lycus. My lord, I dare not wait.
Hyl. [*Eagerly to* LYCUS]. He yields;—I read it in
his softening gaze;
It speaks of life.
Thoas. Yes, I will owe life to thee,
Hyl. Thou hear'st him, Lycus. Let me know the name
Of him whom I could deem my friend.
Thoas. My name?
I have none worthy of thy ear; I thought
To arm a common sound with deathless power;
'Tis past; thou only mark'st me from the crowd
Of crawling earth-worms;—thou may'st call me Thoas.
Lycus. [*Coming forward*]. My prince, forgive me;
I must take his armour.
And lead him hence.
Thoas. Great Jupiter look down!
Hyl. Thoas, thy faith is pledged. [*To* LYCUS]. Stand
back awhile,
If thou hast nature. Thoas will to me
Resign his arms.
Thoas. [*Taking off his helmet*]. To a most noble hand
I yield the glories of existence up,
And bid them long adieu! This plume, which now
Hangs motionless, as if it felt the shame
Its owner bears, wav'd in my boyish thoughts
Ere I was free to wear it, as the sign,
The dancing image of my bounding hopes,
That imaged it above a throng of battles,
Waving where blows were fiercest. Take it hence—
Companion of brave fancies, vanish'd now
For ever, follow them!
[HYLLUS *takes the helmet from* THOAS, *and passes it to*
Hyl. 'Tis nobly done; [LYCUS.
No doubt that it again shall clasp thy brow,
And the plume wave in victory. Thy sword?
Forgive me; I must filch it for a while:

Hide it—O deem it so—in idle sport,
And keep thy chidings till I give it back
Again to smite and spare.
Thoas. Too generous youth,
Permit my depth of sorrow to be calm,
Unruffled by vain hope. [*Takes off his sword.*
Farewell, old sword,
Thou wert the sole inheritance which grac'd
My finish'd years of boyhood—all that time
And fortune spared of those from whom I drew
The thirst of greatness. In how proud an hour
Did I first clasp thee with untrembling hand,
Fit thee, with fond exactness, to my side,
And in the quaint adornments of thy sheath
Guess deeds of valour, acted in old time
By some forgotten chief, whose generous blood
I felt within my swelling veins! Farewell!

[THOAS *gives his sword to* HYLLUS, *who delivers it to* LYCUS.

Hyl. [*Diffidently*]. Thy buckler?
Thoas. [*Takes off his buckler eagerly, and delivers it to* HYLLUS]. I rejoice to part with that;
My bosom needs no bulwark save its own,
For I am only man now. If my heart
Should in its throbbing burst, 'twill beat against
An unapparell'd casing, and be still. *Going.*
Hyl. [*hesitatingly*]. Hold!—one thing more—thy
I grieve that I must ask it. [girdle holds a knife.
Thoas. By the sense
Which 'mid delights I feel thou hast not lost,
Of what, in dread extremity, the brave,
Stripp'd of all other refuge, would embrace,—
I do adjure thee,—rob me not of this!
Hyl. Conceal it in thy vest.

[THOAS *hastily places his dagger in his bosom, and takes the hand of* HYLLUS.

Thoas. We understand
Each other's spirit;—thou hast call'd me friend,
And though in bonds I answer to the name,
And give it thee again.
Lycus. [advancing]. The time is spent

Beyond the king's allowance: I must lead
The captive to the court, where he may meet
His fellows, find his station, and put on
The habit he must wear.

Thoas. Do I hear rightly?
Must an Athenian warrior's free-born limbs
Be clad in withering symbols of the power
By which man marks his property in flesh,
Bones, sinews, feelings, lying Nature framed
For human? They shall rend me piecemeal first!

Hyl. Thoas—friend—comrade,—recollect thy word,
Which now to break were worse disgrace than power
Can fix upon thee, bids thee bear awhile
This idle shame. I shall be proud to walk
A listener at thy side, while generous thoughts
And arts of valour, which may make them deeds,
Enrich my youth. Soon shall we 'scape the court;
Ply the small bark upon the summer sea,
Gay careless voyagers, who leave the shore
With all its vain distinctions, for a world
Of dancing foam and light; till eve invites
To some tall cavern, where the sea-nymphs raise
Sweet melodies; there shalt thou play the prince,
And I will put thy slavish vestments on,
And yield thee duteous service;—in our sport
Almost as potent as light Fortune is,
Who in her wildest freaks but shifts the robe
Of circumstance, and leaves the hearts it cloth'd
Unchang'd and free as ours.

Thoas. I cannot speak.
Come—or mine eyes will witness me a slave
To my own frailty's masterdom.—Come on! [*To* LYCUS.
Thou hast done thy office gently. Lead the way.

[*Exeunt.*

ACT II.

SCENE I.—*A Court in the Palace of* CREON.

Enter CREON *and* LYCUS.

Creon. How does the proud Athenian bear his part
In servile duty?
Lycus. I have never seen
So brave a patience. The severest toils
Look graceful in him, from the facile skill
With which his strength subdues them. Few his words
By question drawn, yet gentle as a child's;
And if, in pauses of his work, his eye
Will glisten, and his bosom heave; anon
He starts as from a dream, submissive bows,
And plies his work again.
Creon. Thou dost espouse
His cause. Beware! he hurl'd defiance on me,
Disdain'd my age, as if his pride of strength
Made him in bondage greater than a king
Sick and infirm as I am; he shall feel
What yet an old man can inflict. He comes;
Why does he leave his duty?
Lycus. 'Tis the hour
Of rest—of food, if he would take it; here
He's privileged to walk.
Creon. Let's stand aside.
[CREON *and* LYCUS *retire from sight.*

Enter THOAS, *in the dress of a slave.*

Thoas. Had I been born to greatness, or achieved
My fame, methinks that I could smile at this;
Taste a remember'd sweetness in the thought
Of pleasure snatch'd from fate; or feed my soul
With the high prospect of serene renown
Beetling above this transitory shame
In distant years. But to be wither'd thus—
In the first budding of my fortune, doom'd
To bear *the death of hope*, and to outlive it!
Gods, keep me patient! I will to my task. [Going.

Re-enter CREON *and* LYCUS.

Lycus. Wilt thou not join thy fellows at the feast,
And taste a cup of wine the king vouchsafes
For merriment to-day!
Thoas. What! are they merry?
Lycus. Dost thou not hear them?
Thoas. They are slaves, indeed!
Forgive me, I would rather seek the quarry. [*Going.*

Enter Messenger.

Messenger [*addressing* CREON.] My lord, the games
in honour of our triumph
Await thee,—first the chariot race, in which
Thy son prepares to strive. The wrestlers next—
Creon. Let them begin. [*Exit* Messenger.
Methinks yon captive's strength,
No longer rebel, might afford us sport.
Thoas!
Thoas. I wait thy pleasure.
Creon. Thou wert train'd,
Doubtless, at home, to manly exercise,
And I would have thee show the youth of Corinth
How the Athenians throw the quoit and wrestle.
Thoas. My lord, I cannot do it!
Creon. One so fram'd
As thou, had he been native here, would revel
In sports like these.
Thoas. O, have I not enjoy'd them!
My lord, I am content to toil and mourn—
'Tis the slave's part; these limbs are thine to use
In vilest service till their sinews fail;
But not a nerve shall bend in sports I loved
When freeman to indulge in, for the gaze
Of those who were my foes and are my masters.

Enter Messenger, *in haste.*

Mess. My lord—the prince—
Thoas. Is he in peril?
Mess. As his chariot, far
Before all rivals, glitter'd nigh the goal,

The coursers plung'd as if some fearful thing
Unseen by human eyes had glared on theirs;
Then, with a speed like lightning, flash'd along
The verge of the dark precipice which girds
The rock-supported plain, and round it still
In frightful circles whirl the youth; no power
Of man can stay them.

Thoas. Friend, I come! I come!

Lycus. [*Attempting to stop him.*] Thou must not go.

Thoas. Away! I'm master now. [*Rushes out.*

Creon. My son! my son! I shall embrace thy corse,
And lie beside it. Yet I cannot bear
This anguish; dead or living, I will seek thee! [*Exit.*

Lycus. (*looking out.*) How the slave spurns the dust; with what a power
He cleaves the wondering throng,—they hide him now,—
Speed him, ye gods of Corinth!

Enter CREUSA.

Creusa. Whence that cry
Of horror mingled with my brother's name?
Is he in danger? Wherefore dost thou stand
Thus silently, and gaze on empty air?
Speak!

Enter IPHITUS. [CREUSA *addressing him.*

From thy sacred lips the truth
Must flow.

Iph. Be calm; thy brother is preserv'd,
Urged by his furious steeds, his chariot hung
Scarce pois'd on the rock's margin, where the vale
Lies deepest under it; an instant more,
And Hyllus, who serenely stood with eyes
Fix'd on the heavens, had perish'd; when a form
With god-like swiftness clove the astonish'd crowd;
Appear'd before the coursers, scarce upheld
By tottering marl;—strain'd forward o'er the gulf
Of vacant ether; caught the floating reins,
And drew them into safety with a touch
So fine, that sight scarce witness'd it. The prince
Is *in his father's arms.*

Creusa. Thou dost not speak
The hero's name;—yet can I guess it well.
Iph. Thoas.—He comes.
Creusa. Let me have leave to thank him.
[*Exeunt* IPHITUS *and* LYCUS.

Enter THOAS.

Hero! accept a maiden's fervent thanks
All that she has to offer for a life
Most precious to her.
Thoas. Speak not of it, fair one!
Life, in my estimate, 's too poor a boon
To merit thanks so rich.
Creusa. Not such a life
As his to me. We both together drew
Our earliest breath, and one unconscious crime
Shar'd; for the hour that yielded us to day
Snatch'd her who bore us. Thence attach'd we grew,
As if some portion of that mother's love
Each for the other cherish'd; twin-born joys,
Hopes, fancies, and affections, each hath watch'd
In the clear mirror of the other's soul,
By that sweet union doubled. Thou hast saved
Two lives in saving Hyllus.
Thoas. 'Tis not meet
That such a wretch as I, in garb like this,
[*Looking at his dress, and shuddering.*
Should listen to the speech of one so fair;
It will unfit me for my tasks.
Creusa. Thy tasks?
O hard injustice!

Enter HYLLUS, CREUSA *meeting him.*

Brother, join thy thanks
To mine. [HYLLUS *and* CREUSA *embrace.*
Thoas. No more. [*Retiring.*
Grant, ye immortal gods,
So beautiful a bond be never broken! [*Exit* THOAS.
Creusa. He speaks of tasks. My brother, can'st endure
To see a hero who hath twice preserv'd

Thy life—upon whose forehead virtue sits
Enthroned in regal majesty—thus held
In vilest thraldom?
Hyl. Ah! my sweet Creusa,
Thy words breathe more than gratitude.
Creusa. My brother,
I pray thee, do not look into my face.
Hyl. Nay, raise thy head, and let thine eye meet
It reads no anger there. Thy love is pure [mine;
And noble as thyself, and nobly placed;
And one day shall be honour'd.
Creusa. Spare me!
Hyl. Come,
The banquet hath begun: the king expects us. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.—*Banqueting-Hall in Creon's Palace.*

CREON, ISMENE, IPHITUS, CALCHAS, *and* Corinthians *seated at the Banquet.*

Creon. [*rising.*] I thank ye for my son;—he is un- [harm'd,
And soon will join our revelry.
Ism. We lack
Attendance. Where is Thoas? It were fit
In Corinth's day of triumph *he* should wait
On his victorious enemies. Go seek him.
[*Exit an* Attendant.
Creon. I would have spared his services to-day;
He is but young in service, and hath done
A glorious deed. Drink round, my friends, and pledge
My son once more.
Ism. My sovereign, I should deem
So great a master in the skill to tame
The nature struggling in a free-born soul,
Would think it wisdom to begin betimes,
When an Athenian spirit should be stifled.
If thou would'st bend him to the yoke, 'twere best
Commence to-day; to-morrow 't may be vain.

Enter THOAS.

Athenian!—slave!—'tis well that thou hast come;
Else *might we fear* thou didst not feel so proud

As such a man as thou should feel, to wait
Upon his victor. Carry round the cup,
And bear it to the king with duteous looks.
Thoas. I will endeavour, lady.
[*Takes the cup, and speaking aside.*
They will join
In very openness of heart, to cast
This shame upon me; take the mantling cup
With thoughtless pleasure from a warrior's hand,
And smile to see it quiver; bless the wine
With household names, sweet thoughts of friends afar,
Or love which death hath hallowed; and while springs
Of cordial joy are quicken'd by the draught,
Will bid affections, generous as their own,
Shrink, agonize, and wither!
Ism. Slave! attend!

Enter HYLLUS *and* CREUSA.

Creon. Hyllus, our friends have pledged thee; take
And thank them. [thy place,
Hyl. [*Advancing.*] I am grateful.—Thoas, thus?
Creon. We blamed thy absence, daughter. Sit beside
The queen.
Creusa. A humbler place befits me, father.
[*Sits at the end of the circle.*
[THOAS *attempts to hand the cup.*
Creusa. [*to* HYLLUS.] Brother, dost see?
Hyl. [*aside to* THOAS, *taking the cup from him.*] Thoas,
I blush at this;
Give me the cup—Corinthian citizens,
This is a moment when I cannot trust
The grace of serving you to any hand
Except mine own. The wine will send a glow
Of rare delight when ministered by one
Who hath this day touch'd life's extremest verge,
And been most bravely rescued. [HYLLUS *hands the cup.*
Ism. Will the king
Permit this mockery?
Creon. Foolish stripling, cease!
Let the slave hand the cup: and having pass'd
Another round, fill high, for I will pour

A great libation out, with such a prayer
As every heart shall echo while the dust
Of Corinth drinks it in.

[THOAS *takes the cup, and approaches* CREUSA.

Creusa. Nay, tremble not.
Think thou dost pay free courtesy to one
Who in the fulness of a grateful heart,
Implores the gods to cherish thee with hope
For liberty and honour.

Thoas. Words so sweet
Reward and o'erpay all.

Creon. Corinthians, rise!
Before the gods, who have this day espoused
The cause of Corinth, I this votive cup
Pour with one glorious prayer—Ruin to Athens!

[THOAS *dashes down the cup he is about to hand to the King.*

Thoas. Ruin to Athens! who dares echo that?
Who first repeats it dies. These limbs are arm'd
With vigour from the gods that watch above
Their own immortal offspring. Do ye dream,
Because chance lends ye one insulting hour,
That ye can quench the purest flame the gods
Have lit from heaven's own fire?

Hyl. [*trying to appease the guests*]. 'Tis ecstacy—
Some frenzy shakes him.

Thoas. No! I call the gods,
Who bend attentive from their azure thrones,
To witness to the truth of that which throbs
Within me now. 'Tis not a city crown'd
With olive and enrich'd with peerless fanes
Ye would dishonour, but an opening world
Diviner than the soul of man hath yet
Been gifted to imagine—truths serene,
Made visible in beauty, that shall glow
In everlasting freshness; unapproach'd
By mortal passion; pure amidst the blood
And dust of conquests; never waxing old;
But on the stream of time, from age to age,
Casting bright images of heavenly youth
To make *the world less* mournful. I behold them!

And ye, frail insects of a day, would quaff
"Ruin to Athens!"
Creon. Are ye stricken all
To statues, that ye hear these scornful boasts,
And do not seize the traitor? Bear him hence,
And let the executioner's keen steel
Prevent renewal of this outrage.
Iph. Hold!
Some god hath spoken through him.
Ism. Priest! we need
No council from thee.
Hyl. Father, he will bend—
'Twas madness—was't not, Thoas?—answer *me:*
Retract thy words!
Thoas. I've spoken, and I'll die.
Ism. 'Twere foolish clemency to end so soon
The death pangs of a slave who thus insults
The king of Corinth. I can point a cell
Deep in the rock, where he may wait thy leisure
To frame his tortures.
Hyl. [*to* CREON.] If thou wilt not spare,
Deal with him in the light of day, and gaze
Thyself on what thou dost, but yield him not
A victim to that cold and cruel heart.
Ism. [*aside.*] Cold! I must bear that too. [*Aloud.*]
Thou hear'st him, king;
Thou hear'st the insolence, which waxes bolder
Each day, as he expects thy lingering age
Will yield him Corinth's throne.
Creon. Ungrateful boy!
Go, wander alien from my love; avoid
The city's bounds; and if thou dare return
Till I proclaim thy pardon, fear to share
The fate of the rash slave for whom thou plead'st.
Thoas. King, I will grovel in the dust before thee;
Will give these limbs to torture; nay, will strain
Their free-born sinews for thy courtiers' sport,
So thou recall the sentence on thy son.
Creon. Thou wilt prolong his exile. To thy cell!
[*To* THOAS.

There wait thy time of death;—my heart is sick—
But I have spoken.
Hyl. Come with me, sweet sister,
And take a dearer parting than this scene
Admits. Look cheerily;—I leave thy soul
A duty which shall lift it from the sphere
Of sighs and tremblings. Father, may the gods
So cherish thee that thou may'st never mourn,
With more than fond regret, the loss of one
Whose love stays with thee ever!
[*Exeunt* HYLLUS *and* CREUSA.
Iph. [*offering to support* CREON]. Hold! he faints!
Creon. No;—I can walk unaided—rest will soothe me.
[*Exit* CREON.
Ism. Good night, my friends!
[*Exeunt all but* ISMENE, THOAS, *and* CALCHAS.
Thou, Calchas, wait and guard
The prisoner to his cell. Thou know'st the place.
Thoas. Lead on.
Ism. [*coming to the front to* THOAS]. Thou wilt not
Thoas. I wish no sleep (sleep?
To reach these eyes, till the last sleep of all.
Ism. Others may watch as well as thou.
Thoas. Strange words
Thou speakest, fearful woman! are they mockeries?
Methinks they sound too solemn.
Ism. Said I not,
I am of Athens? Hush! These walls have echoes!
Thy goaler is of Athens, too; at midnight
He shall conduct thee where we may discourse
In safety. Wilt thou follow him?
Thoas. I will.
Ism. 'Tis well. Conduct the prisoner to his dungeon.
Remember, thou hast promised me.
Thoas. My blood
Is cold as ice; yet will I keep the faith
I plight to thee. [*Exeunt* THOAS *and* CALCHAS.
Ism. (*alone.*) It is the heroic form
Which I have seen in watching, and in sleep
Frightfully broken, through the long, long years,

Which I have wasted here in chains, more sad
Than those which bind the death-devoted slave
To his last stony pillow. Fiery shapes,
That have glared in upon my bed to mock
My soul with hopes of vengeance, keep your gaze
Fix'd steadfast on me now! My hour is nigh! [*Exit.*

ACT III.

SCENE I.—*The Dungeon in the Rock.*

THOAS *discovered, alone.*

Thoas. Ye walls of living rock, whose time-shed stains
Attest that ages have revolved since hands
Of man were arm'd to pierce your solid frame,
And, from your heart of adamant, hew out
Space for his fellow's wretchedness, I hail
A refuge in your stillness; tyranny
Will not stretch forth its palsied arm to fret
Its captive here. Ye cannot clasp me round
With darkness so substantial, as can shut
The airy visions from me which foreshow
The glories Athens will achieve, when I
Am passionless as ye. I hear a step!
It is that mournful lady's minister,
Who comes to waken feelings I would bid
For ever sleep. A light, as of a star,
Gleams in the narrow cavern's steep descent;
And now a form, as of a goddess, glides
To illuminate its blackness. 'Tis Creusa!
My heart is not yet stone.

Enter CREUSA.

I venture hither
Thus boldly to perform a holy office,
Which should have been my brother's.—When he fled
The city of his nurture, his last thoughts
Were bent on his preserver; he bequeathed

His strong injunction never to forsake
The aim of thy deliverance. I exult
That Heaven thus far has prosper'd it; be quick,
And follow me to freedom.
Thoas. Didst thou say
To freedom, lovely one?
Creusa. If thou wilt haste;
The path is clear; the city wrapt in sleep;
I know the pass-word at the gates—how learn'd
By quaint device, I'll tell thee when we meet
In safety,—if we ever meet again!
Thoas. And dost thou wish it?
Creusa. Do I wish it? Yes!
And on the swift fulfilment of that wish
My life is wager'd.
Thoas. There is more than life
To me in these sweet words—speak them again—
But no; once heard they linger on the ear
Which drank them in, for ever. Shapeless rocks
That witness to the sound, rejoice! No fane
Of alabaster while the breeze has slept
In circling myrtles, and the moon disclos'd
Young love's first blush to the wrapt eyes of him
Whose happy boldness raised it, rivals you
In sanctity which rich affection lends
To things of earthly mould. Methinks ye spring
Rounded to columns; your dank mists are curl'd
Upwards in heavenly shapes, and breathe perfume,
While every niche which caught the music speeds
Delicious echoes to the soul. 'Twere bliss
To dwell for ever here.
Creusa. O linger not;
The watch will change at midnight.
Thoas. Midnight—Jove!—
I cannot go.
Creusa. Not go! I ask no thanks—
No recompense—no boon,—save the delight
Of saving thee; for this I've perill'd all—
Life, freedom, fame, and now thou tell'st me, proud one,
That I have perill'd all in vain.

Thoas. Forbear,
In mercy; I have pledg'd my word to wait
A messenger the Queen will send at midnight,
To bring me to her presence.
Creusa. To the Queen?
What would she with thee? She is steel'd 'gainst
I never knew her shed a tear, nor heard [nature
A sigh break from her,—oft she seeks a glen
Hard by the temple of avenging Jove,
Which sinks 'mid blasted rocks, whose narrow gorge
Scarce gives the bold explorer space; its sides,
Glistening in marble blackness, rise aloft
From the scant margin of a pool, whose face
No breeze e'er dimpled; in its furthest shade
A cavern yawns where vapours rise so deadly
That none may enter it and live; they spread
Their rolling films of ashy white like shrouds
Around the fearful orifice, and kill
The very lichens which the earthless stone
Would nurture;—whether evil men, or things
More terrible, meet this sad lady there,
I know not—she will lead thee thither!
Thoas. No—
Not if guilt point the way, if it be sorrow
I must endure it rather than the curse
Which lies upon the faithless heart of him
Who breaks a promise plighted to the wretched;
For she *is* wretched.
Creusa. So am I. Methinks
I am grown selfish; for it is not suffering
I dread should fall upon thee, but I tremble
Lest witchery of that awful woman's grief
Lead thee to some rash deed. Thou art a soldier,
A rash proficient in the game of death,
And may'st be wrought on.
Thoas. Do not fear for me;
Where shows of glory beckon I'll not wait
To pluck away the radiant masks and find
Death under them; but at the thought of blood
Shed save in hottest fight, my spirit shrinks

As from some guilt not aim'd at human things
But at the majesty of gods.
Creusa. Forgive me;
It was a foolish terror swept across
My soul—I should not have forgot 'twas mercy
That made thee captive.
Voice without. Thoas!
Thoas. I am call'd.
The voice came that way—still thy upward path
Is open—haste—he must not find thee here.
Creusa. My prayers—all that the weak can give—are thine.
Farewell! [*Exit.*
Thoas. The gods for ever guard thee!
She glides away—she gains the topmost ridge—
She's safe. Now can I welcome fate with bosom
Steel'd to endure the worst.
Voice without. Thoas
Thoas. I come! [*Exit.*

SCENE II.—*The Hall of Statues in* CREON'S *Palace.*

Enter ISMENE.

Ism. Why tarries Calchas? It is past the hour
Of deepest night, when he should hither guide
The avenger of my sorrows. Gods of Athens!
Whom strong expostulation hath compell'd
To look upon my shame, one little hour
I ask your aid; that granted, never more
Shall the constraining force of passion break
Your dread repose! I hear a warrior's step—
Ye answer, and ye bless me.

Enter CALCHAS *and* THOAS.

It is well. [*To* CALCHAS.
Withdraw, and wait without. I must confer
With this unyielding man alone. [*Exit* CALCHAS.
Thoas. I wait
To learn thy will;—why hast thou bid me leave
The stubborn rock, where I had grown as dull,
As painless as the cell to which thy breath

Consign'd me?—thou who urged the king to wreak
His most inglorious spleen on one too low
To be mark'd out for anger, too resolved
To heed it!

Ism. I beheld in thee a soldier,
Born of that glorious soil whose meanest son
Is nobler than barbarian kings, with arm
Worthy to serve a daughter who has claim
On its best blood. But there is softness in thee,
Weakening thy gallant nature, which may need
The discipline of agony and shame
To master it. Hast thou already learn'd
Enough to steel thee for a generous deed;
Or shall I wait till thou hast lingered long
In sorrow's mighty school? I'm mistress in it,
And know its lessons well.

Thoas. If thou hast aught
Of honour to suggest, I need no more
To fit me for thy purpose; if thy aim
Hath taint of treachery or meanness in it,
I think no pain will bend me to thy will;
At least, I pray the gods so!

Ism. Hadst thou borne
Long years of lingering wretchedness like mine,
Thou wouldst not play the casuist thus. 'Tis well
For lusty youth, that casts no glance beyond
To-morrow's fight or game, which values life
A gewgaw, to be perill'd at a plunge
From some tall rock into an eddying gulf,
For the next revel's glory, to collect
The blood into the cheek, and bravely march
Amidst admiring people to swift death,
And call its heedlessness of what it yields—
A sacrifice heroic. But who knows,
Who guesses, save the woman that endures,
What 'tis to pine each weary day in forms
All counterfeit;—each night to seek a couch
Throng'd by the phantoms of revenge, till age
Find her in all things weaken'd save the wish,
The longing of the spirit which laughs out

In mockery of the withering frame! O Thoas,
I have endured all this—I, who am sprung
From the great race of Theseus!
Thoas. From the race
Of Theseus!—of the godlike man whose name
Hath shone upon my childhood as a star
With magic power?
Ism. Reduced to basest needs
By slow decay in Attica, arrayed
In hateful splendour here, I bear small trace
Of whence I sprang. No matter—spurn'd—disown'd
By living kindred, I have converse held
With those of my great family whom Death
Hath stripp'd of all but glory; and they wait
The triumph of this hour to hail me theirs.
Thoas. Shame to our city, who allow'd a matron
Of that great race to languish!
Ism. Let it pass;
A single grief—a short and casual wrong—
Which—in that sense of ages past and hopes
Resplendent for the future, which are centred
In the great thought of country, and make rich
The poorest citizen who feels a share
In her—is nothing. Had she sought my blood,
To mingle with the dust before the rush
Of some triumphant entry, I had shed it;
And while my life gush'd forth had tasted joy
Akin to her rapt hero's. 'Tis thy lot—
Thy glorious lot—to give me all I live for,—
Freedom and vengeance.
Thoas. What wouldst have me do?
Ism. I have not wasted all the shows of power
Which mock'd my grief, but used them to conceal
The sparks which tyrant fickleness had lit,
And sloth had left to smoulder. In the depths
Of neighbouring caverns, foes of Creon meet
Who will obey thee; lead them thence to-night—
Surprise the palace—slay this hated king,—
Or bear him as a slave to Athens
Thoas. Never!

I am a foe to Corinth—not a traitor,
Nor will I league with treason. In the love
Of my own land, I honour his who cleaves
To the scant graces of the wildest soil,
As I do to the loveliness, the might,
The hope of Athens. Aught else man can do,
In honour, shall be thine.

Ism. I thought I knew
Athenians well; and yet, thy speech is strange.
Whence drew thou these affections,—whence these
Which reach beyond a soldier's sphere? [thoughts

Thoas. From Athens;
Her groves; her halls; her temples; nay, her streets
Have been my teachers. I had else been rude,
For I was left an orphan, in the charge
Of an old citizen, who gave my youth
Rough though kind nurture. Fatherless, I made
The city and her skies my home; have watch'd
Her various aspects with a child's fond love;
Hung in chill morning o'er the mountain's brow,
And, as the dawn broke slowly, seen her grow
Majestic from the darkness, till she fill'd
The sight and soul alike; enjoy'd the storm
Which wrapt her in the mantle of its cloud,
While every flash that shivered it revealed
Some exquisite proportion, pictured once
And ever to the gazer; stood entranc'd
In rainy moonshine, as, one side, uprose
A column'd shadow, ponderous as the rock
Which held the Titan groaning with the sense
Of Jove's injustice; on the other, shapes
Of dreamlike softness drew the fancy far
Into the glistening air; but most I felt
Her loveliness, when summer-evening tints
Gave to my lonely childhood sense of home.

Ism. And was no spot amidst that radiant waste
A home to thee indeed?

Thoas. The hut which held
My foster-father had for me no charms,
Save those his virtues shed upon its rudeness.

I lived abroad:—and yet there is a spot
Where I have felt that faintness of the heart
Which traces of oblivious childhood bring
Upon ripe manhood; where small heaps of stones,
Blacken'd by fire, bear witness to a tale
Of rapine which destroyed my mother's cot,
And bore her thence to exile.
Ism. Mighty gods!
Where stand these ruins?
Thoas. On a gentle slope,
Broken by workings of an ancient quarry,
About a furlong from the western gate,
Stand these remains of penury; one olive,
Projecting o'er the cottage site which fire
Had blighted, with two melancholy stems,
Stream'd o'er its meagre vestiges.
Ism. 'Tis plain!
Hold! Hold! my courage. Let the work be done,
And then I shall aspire. I must not wait
Another hour for vengeance. Dreadful powers!
Who on the precipice's side at eve
Have bid gigantic shadows grayly pass
Before my mortal vision,—dismal forms
Of a fate-stricken race—I see HIM now,
Whom ye led follower of your ghastly train—
O nerve him for his office!
Thoas. Fearful woman!
Speak thy command, if thou wilt have it reach
A conscious ear; for while thou gazest thus,
My flesh seems hardening into stone; my soul
Is tainted; thought of horror courses thought,
Like thunder-clouds swept wildly;—yet I feel
That I must do thy bidding.
Ism. It is well;—
Hast thou a weapon?
Thoas. Yes; the generous prince,
When I resign'd my arms, left me a dagger,
Ism. The prince! The furies sent it by his hand,
For justice on his father.
Thoas. On thy husband?

Ism. Husband! Beware!—my husband moulders yet
Within his rusting armour; such a word
From thee may pierce the rock beneath whose shade
He fell, and curse him with a moment's life
To blast thee where we stand. If this slight king,
In the caprice of tyranny was pleased
To deck me out in regal robes, dost think
That in his wayward smiles, or household taunts,
I can forget the wretchedness and shame
He hurl'd upon me once?

Thoas. What shame?

Ism. What shame!
Thou hast not heard it. Listen! I was pluck'd
From the small pressure of an only babe,
And in my frenzy sought the hall where Creon
Drain'd the frank goblet; fell upon my knees;
Embraced his foot-stool with my hungry arms,
And shriek'd aloud for liberty to seek
My infant's ashes, or to hear some news
Of how it perish'd;—Creon did not deign
To look upon me, but with reckless haste
Dash'd me to earth;—yes! this disgrace he cast
On the proud daughter of a line which traced
Its skiey lineage to the gods, and bore
The impress of its origin,—on me,
A woman, and a mother!

Thoas. Let me fly
And wet Athenian anger with thy wrongs—
My thoughts are strange and slaughterous.

Ism. [*After a pause.*] Fly, then! Yes!—
[*Aside.*] 'Twill be as certain.—I will point a way,
Will lead thee through a chamber to the terrace,
Whence thou may'st reach the wall. Thy only peril
Lies in that chamber. Mark me well;—if there
An arm be raised to stay thee—if a voice
Be heard—or if aught mortal meet thy sight,
Whate'er the form, thy knife is pledged to quench
The life that breathes there.

Thoas. I obey. Farewell!

[*He takes her hand*; she shivers; and drops it.

Ism. Hold off thy hand—it thrills me.—Swear!
Thoas. By those
Who hover o'er us now, I swear!
Ism. Be firm.
That is the door; thou canst not miss the path.
Is thy steel ready?
Thoas. Yes;—my breast is cold
As is that steel.
Ism. Haste—the thick darkness wanes.
[*Exit* THOAS.
Infernal powers! I thank ye—all is paid—
By thousand ecstacies in which my soul
Grows wanton. Calchas!

Enter CALCHAS.

Wish me joy, old servant!
What dost thou think of him who left me now?
Cal. A gallant soldier.
Ism. 'Tis my son—my own!
The very child for whom I knelt to Creon,
Is sent to give me justice. He is gone,
Arm'd with a dagger, through the royal chamber,
Sworn to strike any that may meet him there
A corpse before him. Dost thou think the king
Will see to-morrow?
Cal. He may slumber.
Ism. No—
He hath sent his son to exile—he will wake—
I'm sure he will. There! listen!—'twas a groan!
'Twill be but low—again! 'Tis finish'd! Shades
Of my immortal ancestry, look down,
And own me of your kindred!—Calchas, haste;
Secure possession of the towers that guard
The city gates:—entrust them to our friends,
Who, when I give the word, will set them wide.
Haste! 'tis thy final labour. I shall soon
Be potent to reward the friends who clove
To me in my sad bondage.
Cal. Whither go'st thou?
Ism. To the pale shrine of her whose withering shield

Is dedicate to Athens. I have pray'd
At coldest midnight there, without a hope
Which might shoot life along my freezing veins.
I ask her to allay my raptures now,
By touch of marble—I require its chillness.
There I'll await the issue. It is sure!

[*Exeunt* ISMENE *and* CALCHAS.

SCENE III.—*The outskirts of a Wood on one side; the Athenian Camp on the other. A Watch-fire at a little distance, lighting the Scene.*

PENTHEUS *walking backwards and forwards as a guard.*

Pen. The cold grey dawn begins to glimmer; speed it
Ye powers that favour Athens! From the sea,
Her everlasting guardian, Phœbus, rise,
To pour auspicious radiance o'er the field,
In which she may efface the foul dishonour
Her arms own'd yesterday! Not shame alone,
But loss no morrow can repair, is hers!
Archas, our army's noble leader, sleeps
Beneath the pressure of a thousand shields;
And Thoas, bravest of our youth, a slave—
Perchance, ere this a corpse. Friend whom I loved,
In whose advancing glories I grew proud
As though they had been mine—if yet thou breathest,
I will deliver, and if dead avenge thee!
O, Thoas!

Enter THOAS *wildly, from the wood.*

Thoas. Who pronounced that wretched name,—
That name no honest tongue may utter more?
Pentheus!

Pen. Thoas! most welcome. Thou art come in time
To share a glorious conflict. Ha! thine eyes
Glare with a frightful light;—be calm,—thou art safe;—
This is the camp of those who will reward
Thy great emprise of yesterday, with place
Among the foremost in the battle. Come
To my exulting heart. [*Offering to embrace* THOAS.

Thoas. No!—hold me from thee!—

My heart can ne'er know fellowship again
With such as thine; for I have paid a price
For this vile liberty to roam abroad,
And cry to woods and rocks that answer me
With fearful echoes:—such a price, my Pentheus—
My own unspotted conscience. Dost not see
Foul spots of blood upon this slave's apparel,
Polluting e'en that dress?

Pen. If thou hast struck
Some soldier down to vindicate thy freedom,
Who shall accuse thee?

Thoas. 'Twas no soldier, Pentheus;
No stout opponent that my fatal knife
Dismiss'd to Erebus. A wither'd hand,
As from an old man, in the gloom stretch'd forth,
Scarce met my touch,—which could not have delay'd
My course an instant:—'twas no thought of fear,
No haste for freedom, urged me,—but an oath
Glared on my soul in characters of flame,
And madden'd me to strike. I raised my arm,
And wildly hurl'd my dagger;—nought but air
It seem'd to meet;—but a sharp feeble sigh
Such as death urges when it stops the gasp
Of wasting age, assured me it had done
A murderer's office.

Pen. Think not of it thus:—
Thy lips are parch'd,—let me fetch water.

Thoas. No!
I have drank fiercely at a mountain spring,
And left the stain of blood in its pure waters;
It quench'd my mortal thirst, and I rejoiced,
For I seem'd grown to demon, till the stream
Cool'd my hot throat, and then I laugh'd aloud,
To find that I had something human still.

Pen. Fret not thy noble heart with what is past.

Thoas. No!—'tis not past!—the murderer has no
But one eternal PRESENT. [PAST;

Hyl. [*within the woods.*] Help me!—answer!—

Thoas. The voice of Hyllus!—of that noble youth,
Who, for my sake, is outcast from his home,

So near the camp of Athens! Should our guards
Arrest him, he will perish. Friend! That voice
Comes on my ear like that of one who served me,
In yonder city; leave thy watch to me
A moment.
Pen. No—thy passion's dangerous;
I dare not trust it.
Thoas. See—I have subdued
The pang which wrung me. By our ancient loves
Grant me this boon—perhaps the last.
Pen. Be quick,
For the watch presently will be removed,
And the trump call to battle. [*Exit* PENTHEUS.
Thoas. [*calling to* HYLLUS.] *Here!* The hope
Of saving Hyllus wafts into my soul
A breath of comfort.

Enter HYLLUS.

Hyl. I have lost my path,
Wandering the dismal night in this old wood;
I'd seek the coast; canst thou point out the way?
Thoas. Avoid it—on each side the Isthmus, ships
Of Athens ride at anchor.
Hyl. [*recognizing him.*] Thoas! free—
Then I am bless'd, and I can bear my lot,
However hard;—I guess the hand that drew
The dungeon bolts;—how didst thou quit the palace?
Thoas. Why dost thou ask me that? Through a large chamber
That open'd on the terrace—'twas all dark;—
Tell me who lay there?
Hyl. 'Tis my father's chamber,
Did he awake?
Thoas. Thy father!—gods! The king!
The feeble old man with the reverend hair?
Art sure he rested there?
Hyl. Sure. No one else
May enter after sunset, save the queen.
Thoas. The queen! all's clear!—Jove strike me into marble!

Hyl. Why dost thou tremble so? as if a fit
Of ague shook thee?
Thoas. Nothing—only thought
Of my past danger came upon my soul
And shook it strangely. Was the old man there?
[*Stands abstractedly as stupified.*
Pen. Thoas! [*Without.*
Thoas. Haste!—Do not lose a moment!—fly!
The watch-fire that is waning now is fed
By hands which, madden'd by the foul defeat
Of yesterday, will slay thee.
Hyl. Whither fly?
The camp of Athens is before me;—ships
Of Athens line the coasts,—and Corinth's king
Hath driven me forth an exile. I'll return
And crave my father's pardon.
Thoas. No—not there—
Yet, where should the poor stripling go? O Jove!
When he shall learn—
Hyl. Farewell—yet hold an instant!—
Wilt thou not send some message to Creusa,
That she may greet her brother with a smile?
Thoas. Creusa smile!—Methinks I see her now—
Her form expands—her delicate features grow
To giant stone; her hairs escape their band,
And stream aloft in air;—and now they take
The form of fiery serpents—how they hiss—
And point their tongues at Thoas!
Hyl. This is frenzy;
I cannot leave thee thus:—whate'er my fate,
I will attend and soothe thee.
Thoas. Soothe me!—Boy,
Wouldst haunt me with that face which now I see
Is like thy father's. Ha! ha! ha! Thou soothe me—
Look not upon me; by this lurid light
Thou glarest a spectre. Hence, or I will rend thee!
Hyl. I rather would die here.
Thoas. Fool! fool! away!
[*Exit* HYLLUS.

He's gone—yet *she* is with me still,—with looks
More terrible than anger;—take away
That patient face,—I cannot bear its sweetness;—
Earth, cover me! [*Falls on the ground.*

Enter PENTHEUS.

Pen. The troops are arming fast;
They call on thee to lead them.—Hark, the trump—
[*The trumpet sounds.*
Thoas. (*Leaps up.*) Yes; I will answer to its call.
Again
Thou shalt behold me strike. In yonder field
I'll win that which I hunger for.
Pen. A crown
Of laurel which hath floated in thy dreams
From thy brave infancy—
Thoas. A grave! a grave! [*Exeunt.*

ACT IV.

SCENE I.—*The interior of the Funereal Grove at Corinth. The Urn of* CREON.

CREUSA *discovered, bending over it.*

Creusa. 'Tis strange!—I cannot weep for him; I've
tried
To reckon every artifice of love
Which 'mid my father's waywardness proclaim'd
His tenderness unalter'd;—felt again
The sweet caresses infancy received,
And read the prideful look that made them sweeter;
Have run the old familiar round of things
Indifferent, on which affection hangs
In delicate remembrances which make
Each household custom sacred;—I've recall'd
From Memory's never-failing book of pain,
My own neglects of dutiful regard

Too frequent—all that should provoke a tear—
And all in vain. My feelings are as dull,
Mine eyes are rigid, as when first they met
The horrid vision of his thin white hairs
Matted with blood! Gods, let me know again
A touch of natural grief, or I shall go
Distract, and think the bloody form is here.

Enter HYLLUS.

Hyllus! my brother! thou wilt make me weep,
For we shall mourn as we were loved together.
Dost thou know all?

Hyl. Yes, all.—Alas! Creusa,
He died in anger with me.

Creusa. Do not dwell
On that sad thought;—but recollect the cause
Was noble—the defence of one whose soul
Claims kindred with thine own.

Hyl. Unhappy sister,
What sorrow stranger than thy present grief
Awaits thee yet! I cannot utter it.

Creusa. Speak;—any words of thine will comfort me.

Hyl. I fear thou must no longer link the thoughts
Of nobleness and Thoas.

Creusa. Then my soul
Must cease all thinkings; for I've blended them
Till they have grown inseparate. What is this?

Hyl. That he hath made us orphans.

Creusa. He is free
From such ignoble guiltiness as thou.
What fury shed this thought into a soul
Once proud to be his debtor?

Hyl. Poor believer
In virtue's dazzling counterfeit, 'tis sad
To undeceive thee. At the break of day
I met the murderer, frantic from his crime,
In anguish which explain'd by after proofs
Attests his guilt.

Creusa. And is this all? Hast said
All thou canst urge against the nobleness
Which breathes in every word? Against thy life

Preserv'd at liberal hazard of his own?
Against the love which I was proud to bear
For him, and that with which he more than paid me?
He in some frenzy utter'd aimless words,
And thou at once believed'st him guilty. Go!
Haste and accuse him. Henceforth we are twain.

Hyl. Sister, I never will accuse him.

Creusa. Take
My thanks for that small promise, though our souls
While thine is tainted with this foul belief,
Can ne'er be mingled as they have been. Now
I see why I was passionless. Ismene
Bends her steps hither; thou hadst best retire;
She rules the city, for her secret friends
Cast off their masks, and own themselves the foes
Of Corinth's prince.

Hyl. Beside my father's urn
I shall await her.

Creusa. I will not expose
My anguish to her cold and scornful gaze;—
Brother, farewell awhile; we are divided,
But I will bless thee. [*Exit.*

Enter ISMENE *and* Guards.

Ism. Wherefore art thou here,
Despite the sentence which the king pronounced
Of exile?

Hyl. I have come to mourn a father,
Whose words of passion had been long unsaid,
Had his kind heart still throbb'd; and next, to claim
My heritage.

Ism. Thine!—win it, if thou canst——

Enter CALCHAS.

How stands the battle?

Cal. Corinth's soldiers fly,
Routed in wild disorder. Thoas leads
The troops of Athens, and will soon appear
In triumph at our gates.

Ism. Leads, say'st thou?—leads?
Let Corinth's gates stand open to admit

The hero,—give him conduct to the hall,
Where sculptured glories of Corinthian kings
Shall circle him who sham'd them,—there, alone,
I would crave speech with him. [*Exit* CALCHAS.
Hyl. [*To the* Soldiers]. My countrymen,
Will ye endure this shame? I am a youth
Unskill'd in war; but I have learn'd to die
When life is infamy. If ye will join me,
We'll close the gates with ramparts of the slain.
Does no heart answer mine?
Ism. Their swords shall curb
Thy idle ravings. Athens triumphs now!—
Attend him to his chamber, and beware
He leaves it not.
Hyl. For this I ought to thank thee:
I would not see my country's foul disgrace;
But thou shalt tremble yet. [*Exit, guarded.*
Ism. Now shall I clasp him—
Clasp him a victor o'er my country's foes;—
The slayer of him most hated. Double transport!
The dream of great revenge I lived upon
Was never bright with image of such joy,
And now comes link'd with vengeance! Thoas, haste!
[*Exit.*

SCENE II.—*Before the gates of Corinth.*

Shouts without. THOAS *in armour, with his sword drawn, and Athenian* Soldiers, *as in pursuit.*

Thoas. Here we may breathe awhile from conquest;
A noble chase, we scarce may call it battle; ['twas
Success so quick hath followed on success,
That we shall want more time to count our glories
Than we have spent in winning them. The foe
Is niggard, and will not allow our arms
One day of conflict. We have won too soon.
Grant me, great gods! instead of years of life,
Another such an hour.
Soldier. My lord, here's wine;
'Tis from the seats of Corinth.

Thoas. Not a drop.
My heart's too light—too jocund to allow
Another touch of ecstacy, derived
From mortal fruitage; nay, were it Jove's nectar,
I'd set the untasted cup of crystal down,
And wait till all our glorious work were finish'd!
Soldiers! we sup in Corinth! You'll not wait
Past time of hunger, if ye are not faint
With rapid conquest.

Enter PENTHEUS *and Soldiers.*

Pen. Noble leader, hail!
Thy country's heroes bless thee with the sense
Of their delighted wonder! With one voice
They greet thee as the winner of this fight,
To which thou led'st them. Never was a scheme
Of battle plann'd in council of the sage,
Form'd with a skill more exquisite than that
Which in the instant thou were call'd to lead us,
Flash'd on thy spirit, and in lines of fire
From thine was manifest to ours? Art wounded?

Thoas. A very scratch; I blush to think no more;
Some frolic blood let in the strife had served
To moderate my fervours.

Pen. See! our comrades
Have snatched a branch from the Corinthian laurels
To wreath thy brow! Soldiers, 't is much I ask;
But when I tell ye I have watch'd your chief
From the first flash that dazzled in his eye
A tale of glory, ye may yield to me
The pride and joy of offering him this honour.

[Soldier *gives the wreath to* PENTHEUS, *who gives it to* THOAS.

I thank ye, comrades.

Thoas. The immortal gods
Grant me a double blessing in the friend
From whom I take this happiness. O Pentheus!
I have mused fondly—proudly—on the fate
Which waits upon my country; when the brow
Which thou wouldst deck, was bared to mist and storm;

When every moonlit fountain which displaced
The blackness of the moss-grown hillock told
Of the pure beauty which her name should keep,
Empearling starless ages; when each wave
That rippled in her harbour, to my ear
Spoke glad submission to the Queen of Cities;
But never, 'mid my burning hopes for Athens,
Did I believe that *I* should stand thus crown'd,
Her laurell'd soldier! Friends, the sun-light wanes,
And we must sup in Corinth!

Pen. See, the gates
Open to welcome us! [*The gates open.*

Thoas. Without a blow?
We shall not earn our banquet. So expands
Before the vision of my soul, the east
To the small cluster of our godlike sons.
Let Asia break the mirror of our seas
With thousand sterns of ivory, and cast
The glare of gold upon them to disturb
The azure hue of heaven, they shall be swept
As glittering clouds before the sun-like face
Of unappliianced virtue! Friends, forgive me;
I have been used to idle thought, nor yet
Have learn'd to marry it to action. Blest
To-day in both.

Pen. A herald from the city.

Enter CALCHAS.

Cal. I am commissioned by the queen to speak
With Thoas.

Thoas. I am here.

[*Trembles, and supports himself, as paralyzed, on* PEN.
Thou art commission'd
From the infernal powers to cross my path
Of glorious triumph, with a shape that brings
Before me terrible remembrance, which
Had strangely vanish'd from me.

Pen. [*To the Soldiers.*] He is ill,—
Retire.

Thoas. *No—should* the herald fade in air,

He would not leave his office unfulfill'd,
One look hath smit my soul.
Pen. Is this a dream?
Thoas. No—'tis a dreadful waking—I have dreamt
Of honour, and have struggled in that dream
For Athens, as if I deserved to fight
Unsullied in her cause. The joy of battle
In eddies as a whirlpool had engulf'd
The thought of one sad moment, when my soul
Was blasted; but it rises in the calm,
Like form of slaughter'd seaman, that pursues
The murderous vessel which swept proudly on,
When his death-gurgle ended. Hence, vain wreath!—
Thou wouldst entwine my brow with serpent coldness,
And wither instant there. [*Tears the wreath.*
So vanish all
My hopes; they are gone—I'm fit to answer thee.
Who sent thee here? [*To* CALCHAS.
Cal. The queen.
Thoas. A worthy mistress
Of such a slave—thy errand?
Cal. She who rules
In Corinth now, admits the victor's power,
And bids the gates thus open: she requires
A conference with Thoas in the hall
Next to the royal chamber—thou hast been
There, as I think, my lord.
Thoas. I know full well;
Lead, dreadful herald, on!
Pen. The troops attend
The order of their general.
Thoas. [*To* CALCHAS.] Why dost wait?
Thou see'st that I obey thy call.
Pen. My friend,
Thy blood is fever'd—thou may'st choose thy time—
Postpone this meeting.
Thoas. [*To* CALCHAS.] Why dost tarry? turn
Thy face away—it maddens me—go on!
[*Exit after* CALCHAS.

Soldier. [*To* PENTHEUS.] My lord, we wait for orders: this strange man,
Half warrior and half rhapsodist, may bring
Our army into peril.

Pen. Fear it not;
He has all elements of greatness in him,
Although as yet not perfectly commingled,
Which is sole privilege of gods. They cast
Such piteous weakness on the noblest men
That we may feel all mortal. 'Tis a cloud
Which speedily will pass, and thou shalt see
The hero shine as clearly forth in council
As he has done in victory. Meanwhile
He leaves us pleasant duty—form your lines—
Sound trumpets—march triumphant into Corinth!

[*The Athenians enter Corinth.*

SCENE III.—*The Hall of Statues in the Palace, same as in Third Act.*

Thoas. [*Alone.*] Again I stand within this awful hall;
I found the entrance here, without the sense
Of vision; for a foul and clinging mist,
Like the damp vapour of a long-closed vault,
Is round me. Now its objects start to sight
With terrible distinctness? Crimson stains
Break sudden on the walls! The fretted roof
Grows living! Let me hear a human voice,
Or I shall play the madman!

Enter ISMENE, *richly dressed.*

Ism. Noble soldier,
I bid thee welcome, with the rapturous heart
Of one, for whom thy patriot arm hath wrought
Deliverance and revenge—but more for Athens
Than for myself, I hail thee: why dost droop?
Art thou oppressed with honours, as a weight
Thou wert not born to carry? I will tell
That which shall show thee native to the load,
And shall requite thee with a joy as great
As that thou hast conferr'd. Thy life was hid
Beneath inglorious accident, till force

Of its strong current urged it forth to-day,
To glisten and expand in sun-light. Know
That it has issued from a fountain bright
As is its destiny.—Thou sharest with me
The blood of Theseus.
Thoas. If thy speech is true,
And I have something in me which responds
To its high tidings, I am doom'd to bear
A heavier woe than I believed the gods
Would ever lay on mortal; I have stood
Unwittingly upon a skiey height,
By ponderous gloom encircled,—thou hast shown
The mountain-summit mournfully reversed
In the black mirror of a lurid lake,
Whose waters soon shall cover me,—I've stain'd
A freeman's nature; thou hast shown it sprung
From gods and heroes, and wouldst have me proud
Of the foul sacrilege?
Ism. If that just deed,
Which thus disturbs thy fancy, were a crime,
What is it in the range of glorious acts,
Past and to come, to which thou art allied,
But a faint speck, an atom, which no eye
But thine would dwell on?
Thoas. It infects them all;
Spreads out funereal blackness as they pass
In sad review before me. Hadst thou pour'd
This greatness on my unpolluted heart,
How had it bounded! now it tortures me,
From thee, fell sorceress, who snared my soul
Here—in this very hall!—May the strong curse
Which breathes from out the ruins of a nature
Blasted by guilt—
Ism. Hold! Parricide—forbear!
She whom thou hast avenged, she whom the death
Of Creon hath set free, whom thou wouldst curse,
Is she who bore thee!
Thoas. Thou!
Ism. Dost doubt my word!
Is there no witness in thy mantling blood

Which tells thee whence 'twas drawn? Is nature silent?
If, from the mists of infancy, no form
Of her who, sunk in poverty, forgat
Its ills in tending thee, and made the hopes
Which glimmer'd in thy smiles her comfort—gleams
Upon thee yet;—hast thou forgot the night
When foragers from Corinth toss'd a brand
Upon the roof that shelter'd thee; dragg'd out
The mother from the hearth where she had sat
Resign'd to perish, shrieking for the babe
Whom from her bosom they had rent? That child
Now listens. As in rapid flight I gazed
Backward upon the blazing ruin, shapes
Of furies, from amid the fire, look'd out
And grinn'd upon me. Every weary night
While I have lain upon my wretched bed,
They have been with me, pointing to the hour
Of vengeance. Thou hast wrought it for me, son!
Embrace thy mother!

Thoas. Would the solid earth
Would open, and enfold me in its strong
And stifling grasp, that I might be as though
I ne'er was born.

Ism. Dost mock me? I have clasp'd
Sorrow and shame as if they were my sons,
To keep my heart from hardening into stone;
The promised hour arrived; and when it came,
The furies, in repayment, sent an arm,
Moulded from mine, to strike the oppressor dead.
I triumph'd,—and I sent thee!

Thoas. Dost confess
That, conscious who I was, thou urged my knife
Against the king?

Ism. Confess!—I glory in it!—
Thy arm hath done the purpose of my will;
For which I bless it. Now I am thy suitor.
Victorious hero! Pay me for those cares
Long past, which man ne'er guesses at;—for years
Of daily, silent suffering, which young soldiers
Have not a word to body forth; for all,—

By filling for a moment these fond arms,
Which held thee first.
Thoas. [*Shrinking from her.*] I cannot. I will kneel
To thank thee for thy love, ere thou didst kill
Honour and hope;—then grovel at thy feet,
And pray thee trample out the wretched life
Thou gav'st me.
Ism. Ha! Beware, unfeeling man:—
I had opposed, had crush'd all human loves,
And they were wither'd; thou hast call'd them forth,
Rushing in crowds from memory's thousand cells,
To scoff at them. Beware! They will not slumber,
But sting like scorpions.
Enter IPHITUS.
Wherefore dost intrude
On this high conference?
Iph. The people cry
That solemn inquisition should be held
For Creon's blood!—else do they fear the gods
Will visit it on them.
Ism. They need not fear.
It will be well avenged.
Iph. To thee, Ismene,
That which I next must speak, is of dear import!—
Wilt hear it in this noble stranger's presence?
Ism. Say on, old man.
Iph. From the old crumbling altar,
Just as the gates were open'd, breathed a voice
In whisper low, yet heard through each recess
Of Jove's vast temple, bidding us to seek
Of thee, Ismene, who the murderer is,
And summon thee to the same fearful spot,
To speak it there.
Ism. [*To* THOAS.] Athenian! dost thou hear?
Thoas. I hear.
Iph. The hostile nations lay aside
Their quarrel, till this justice to the dead
Be render'd. Chiefs of each will guard the fane,
And wait the solemn issue.—In their name
And in the mightier name of him whose shrine

Hath burst long silence, I command thee, queen,
Thou presently be there.
Ism. I shall obey—
Beside the altar place the regal seat;
And there, in state befitting Corinth's queen,
I'll take my place. [*To* THOAS.
Farewell! Thou wilt be there!
Thoas. Be sure I will not fail.
Ism. 'Tis well! 'Tis well!
(*Exit.*
Iph. Thou saidst thou shouldst attend?
Thoas. I shall. What more
Would'st thou have with me?
Iph. I would ask a band
Of the most noble of Athenian youth,
To witness this procedure; and to lend
Their conduct, should the murderer stand reveal'd,
To keep the course of justice unassail'd,
And line the path of death.
Thoas. All that can make
The wretch accurs'd, shall wait him. Let me breathe
Alone a moment. [*Exit* IPHITUS.
How they'll start to see
The guilty one descend the solemn steps,
And hang their heads for shame, and turn their eyes
In mercy from him. [*Going.*

Enter CREUSA.

Creusa. For a moment hear me—
I would not break on thy triumphant hours,
But for my brother's sake. Do not refuse,
For if he wrong'd thee by a frantic thought,
There was one ready to defend thy honour
From slightest taint!
Thoas. What taint? the breath of infamy
Spreads o'er my name already!
Creusa. Do not ask— [make
'Twas a wild thought;—but there are tongues which
As false a charge; tongues which have power to crush
The guiltless!—They have murmur'd that this crime
Is that of Hyllus!

Thoas. Hyllus, the unsullied!
Creusa. I knew that thou would'st say so—that no
Of circumstance would weigh in thy pure thought [force
Against the beauty of his life. They found him
Just after day-break, suddenly return'd
From exile, in the chamber of the king,
Gazing with bloodless aspect on a sight
Of bloodshed;—yet thou dost not think 'twas he
That with a craven hand—
Thoas. O no!
Creusa. And thou
Wilt plead his cause—wilt save him from the fate
That threatens his young life?
Thoas. My own shall first
Be quench'd!
Creusa. The gods repay thee for the word!
O brother, brother! could'st thou wrong this heart
With foul suspicion? Why dost turn away,
And shrink and shudder in the warrior's dress,
As when I thank'd thee for that brother's life,
At the slave's vest which then, in thy proud thought,
Debased the wearer?
Thoas. O, I thought so then!
Now I would give the treasures of the deep,
Nay more—the hope of glory—to resume
Those servile garments with the spotless thoughts
Of yesterday.

Enter Messenger.

Mess. My general, Pentheus, asks
If, by thy sanction, Iphitus requires
His presence in the temple?
Thoas. Pentheus.—yes.
Creusa. (THOAS *turns away.*) Why in the temple?
Wilt not speak?
Mess. The priest
There summons all to some high trial.
Creusa. I see it!—
They meet to judge my brother. I will fly—
Thoas. Thou must not, lady—in that fearful place
Horrors unguess'd at by thy gentle nature

Will freeze thy youthful blood, that thou shalt pass
No happy moment more.
Creusa. And what have I
To do with happiness? I am not young,
For I grew old in moments fraught with love
And anguish. Now I feel that I could point
The murderer out with dreadful skill—could mark
The livid paleness, read the shrinking eye,
Detect the empty grasping of the hand
Renewing fancied slaughter;—why dost turn
Thus coldly from me! Ah! thou hast forgot
The vows which, when in slavery, thou offer'd,
And I was proud to answer—if not, Thoas,
Once press my hand; O gods! he lets it fall!—
So withers my last hope—so my poor heart
Is broken. [*Faints.*
Thoas. [*To* Messenger.] Take her gently in.
[Messenger *supports her out*
One glance. [*Looks at her and shudders.*
O that the beauty I have loved and worshipped
Should be a thing to shiver me!—'Tis just. [*Exit.*

ACT V.

SCENE I.—*The interior of the Temple of Jupiter the Avenger*—ISMENE *seated in the midst, in a Chair of State—Corinthians on the right, and Athenians on the left side of the Temple—At the extremity on the right side,* HYLLUS *standing,—At the extremity of the left,* THOAS *seated.*

Iph. Corinthians and Athenians! late opposed
In mortal conflict, dedicated now
To solemn work of Justice, hear the will
Of the Avenging Power, beneath whose roof
Ye stand thus marshall'd. Royal blood hath stain'd
A palace floor:—not shed in blazing war,
But in night's peace; not some hot soldier's blood,
But the thin current of a frame made sacred
To Orcus' gentlest arrow. Heaven requires

Both nations to unite in dealing death
Upon the slayer, who, unslain, will draw
Its withering curse on both. In yonder shrine
Which dim tradition's fearful whispers made
A terror to my infancy, a voice,
Which breathed fell murmurs to ancestral ears,
Breaks centuries of silence to pronounce
The Queen as gifted to direct the shaft
To the cursed head;—and every sign around us
By which the world invisible, when charged
With bloody secret struggles to subdue
Things visible to organs which may send
Its meaning to the startled soul, attest
The duty I assume.—Ismene!

Ism. Priest
Of Jove, I am attendant to thy summons;—
What is thy wish?

Iph. Sad widow of a king
Whose feeble life some cruel hand hath stopp'd,
I do adjure thee by those hoary hairs,
That changed their hue from raven whilst thou shared
His mansion;—by celestial powers, who watch
Our firmness now;—and by those fearful gods,
Whom 'tis unblest to mention, lay aside
All terror, all affection, all remorse,—
If cause of penitence thou hast,—to rend
The veil of darkness which the murderer wears,
And give him to his destiny. Begin
The solemn strain which shall attune our souls
To hearken and to execute! [*Solemn music.*
Ismene,
Speak: Dost thou know the slayer?

Ism. Yes!

Iph. Dost thou
Behold him now?

Ism. [*Looking wildly round.*] I do not see the faces
Or know the names of all. Who is the man
That at the right side of the circle stands?

Iph. The youth with head erect and cloudless brow?
That is the orphan'd Hyllus.

Ism. Who is he
That sits upon the other side, apart
With face averted?

[THOAS *turns his head suddenly, and looks upon her.*

I behold him now.
It is a dreadful duty you exact
From me—a woman. If I speak the name
What sentence follows?

Iph. Death!

Ism. And soon performed?

Iph. The Fates require that he thou shalt denounce
As guilty, must be led in silence hence,
And none behold him after, save his slayers.
Attend once more! Thou hast declared thou know'st
The guilty one! I ask thee—is he here?

Ism. O Gods! He is.

Iph. Name him!

Cal. She shudders! See,—
I think she cannot speak!

Iph. If quivering tongue
Refuse its office, point the victim out.

[ISMENE *rises; turns towards* THOAS, *who rises, and confronts her; she trembles, pauses, and sinks into her seat.*

Iph. Thou hast confess'd the guilty one is here;
Where stands he?

[ISMENE *rises; points to* HYLLUS, *shrieks* "There!" *and falls back senseless in her chair.*

Thoas. 'Tis false!

[CREUSA *rushes forward and embraces* HYLLUS.

Creusa. Most false! O murderess.
Protect him, noble Thoas!

Hyl. Peace, my sister:—
Implore no mortal aid; let us be patient,
And suffer calmly what the gods decree.
My life may satisfy.

Iph. It cannot be!
Hold—stir not—breathe not—from that shrine the voice
Of heaven will answer hers. Do ye not hear? [*A pause.*
Hark!—It is voiceless, and the youth is doom'd.

Thoas. Forbear, ye murderous judges; look upon him!
See on his forehead Nature's glorious seal

Of innocence, outspeaking thousand voices,
Which shining in the presence of the gods,
Still shows him guiltless.
Iph. Prove it.
Thoas. With my life-blood!
O could ye place me in some dizzy cleft
Of inmost Thracian hills, when ribb'd with ice,
To hear from every rocky shelf a howl
Of wolves aroused to famine,—I would stand—
Calm,—O far calmer than I stand,—to wait
Their fangs, and let my tortured sinews' strength
Attest his cause;—'twere nothing—'twere no pain—
To what the spirit feels. Thou talk'st of curses:
Beware! There is no curse with such a power
As that of guiltless blood pour'd out by mortals
In the mock'd name of justice.
Hyl. [*To* THOAS, *aside.*] Thou wilt tell
Thy secret;—keep it. Leave me to my doom.
Thoas. Never! Corinthians, hear me——
Ism. [*recovering.*] What is this?
Why waits the parricide still there? Who dares
Dispute my sentence?
Thoas. I!
Ism. Be silent. She
Who most in all the world should have command
O'er thee, requires thy silence.
Pen. [*stepping forward from the Athenian rank.*] By what right
Dost thou—Queen of the vanquish'd—dare command
The leader of the conquerors?
Ism. By a mother's!

[THOAS *sinks into his seat*—ISMENE *descends and stands beside him.*

Ism. Athenians—victors!—'tis your fitting name,
By which I gladly hail you. Ye behold
One whom ye left to suffer, but who boasts
Your noblest blood. See! I command my son
To quit this roof, and leave me to the work
The gods have destined for me.
Thoas. Stand aside!

I have a suit I would prefer alone,
Which may save guilt and sorrow.
Iph. [*to* HYLLUS.] Lean on me.
[*To* THOAS.] Be brief.
Hyl. I have no need; yet will I take
This thy last kindness; for I can accept it
Without a blush or shudder.
[*All retire, leaving* THOAS *and* ISMENE *in front.*
Thoas. Why hast heap'd
Foul crime on crime?
Ism. Son! there has been no crime
Except for thee. The love that thou hast scorn'd
From the heart's long-closed shrine, outwhisper'd fate
And saved thee.
Thoas. Saved me! Thou may'st save me yet;
Recall thy sentence. Give me truth and death!
Ism. And own my falsehood? No! Let us go hence
Together.
Thoas. And permit this youth to die!
O that some god would mirror to thy soul
Our mortal passage, while the arid sand
We pace; the yellow, sunless sky above us;
And forms distort with anguish, which shall meet
Each vain attempt to be alone, enclose
The conscious blasters of the earth, till forced
To gaze upon each other, we behold,
As in eternal registry, the curse
Writ in the face of each! No; let us pray
For torture and for peace!
Ism. If thou remain,
And risk dishonour to our house and me,
The poisonous cave below shall be my home,
And shelter me for ever!
Thoas. Bravely thought—
As fits a matron of heroic line;
Be great in penitence, and we shall meet
Absolved, where I may join my hand to thine,
And walk in duteous silence by thy side.
Ism. And couldst thou love me then?
Thoas. Love thee! My mother,

When thou didst speak that word, the gloom of years
Was parted,—and I knew again the face
Which linger'd o'er my infancy,—so pale,
So proud, so beautiful! I kneel again,
A child, and plead to that unharden'd heart,
By all the long past hours of priceless love,
To let my gushing soul pass forth in grace,
And bless thee in its parting!

Ism. Never!

Thoas. [*rising.*] Yes!
Haste ere the roof shall fall, and crush the germ
Of sweet repentance in us: take thy seat,
And speak as thy heart dictates—

[*Drawing* ISMENE *towards her seat.*
Hear again!

Ism. Unhand me—rebel son! Assembled Chiefs,
Ye called me—I have spoken once—I speak
No more; make way there!—I must pass alone!

[*Exit* ISMENE.

Thoas. [*Calling to* ISMENE.] O! mother, stay! She's gone. [*Sinks into his chair.*

Iph. Her word decides,
Unless the gods disown it. Peace! the altar
Is silent; the last moment presses on us—
Hyllus, the doom'd, stand forth!

Creusa. O pause; to thee
Thoas, I call; thou know'st him guiltless.

Iph. Hold!
No mortal passion can have utterance here,
When fate is audible. To yield is ours;
Be calm as Hyllus, or forego his hand.

[CREUSA *sinks on her knees beside* HYLLUS; IPHITUS *lays one hand on the head of* HYLLUS, *and raises the other towards heaven.*

Iph. Dread Power, that bade us to this fane, accept
The expiation that we offer now,
And let this blood pour'd forth avert thy vengeance!

[THOAS *suddenly falls from his seat to the ground.* CREUSA *rushes to him, and all surround him.*

Creusa. Gods! what is this new horror?

[*Opening the vest of* THOAS, *the dagger, with which he has secretly stabbed himself, falls from it.*

Thoas. There! 'Tis done
'Tis well accomplish'd.
Creusa. Hyllus, go!
Brother, no more—for thee he perishes.
Thoas. I will not purchase a last thrill of joy,
By such estrangement. That steel bears the blood
Of Creon and his slayer!
—Raise me! So—
That I may press your generous monarch's hand.
Nay, turn not from me, Hyllus! Speak one word
Of sweet forgiveness.
Hyl. Had it pleased the Gods,
Instead of thine, to take a stripling's life,
How had that giddy sharpness been repaid
By mighty deeds thou wouldst have acted!
Thoas. No—
If I were framed by nature for dishonour,
I might have liv'd and conquer'd, and enjoy'd,
And won a glorious name;—my soul was noble—
And shiver'd at the shadow of its crime,
And clos'd on this world;—in another sphere
It may expand unsoil'd—it opens now—
And guilt is passing from me with my life-blood.

Enter CALCHAS.

Cal. The Queen!
Thoas. Hold life a moment—Speak!—The Queen?
Cal. She rush'd,
With looks none dared to question, to the cave;
Paused at its horrid portal; toss'd her arms
Wildly abroad; then drew them to her breast,
As if she clasp'd a vision'd infant there;
And as her eye, uplifted to the crag,
Met those who might prevent her course, withdrew
Her backward step amidst the deadly clouds
Which veil'd her—till the spectral shape was lost,
Where none dare ever tread to seek for that
Which was Ismene.

Thom. Peace be with her! Pentheus,
Thy hand;—let Hyllus reign in honour here;—
Convey me to the city of my love;
Her future years of glory stream more clear
Than ever on my soul. O Athens! Athens! [*Dies.*

Hyl. Sister!

Creusa. Forgive me, brother.
[*Falls on the neck of* HYLLUS.

Hyl. Weep there; 'tis thy home.
Fate that has smitten us so young, leaves this—
That we shall cleave together to the grave.

The curtain falls.

GLENCOE:

OR,

THE FATE OF THE MACDONALDS.

A TRAGEDY, IN FIVE ACTS.

TO

LORD JEFFREY,

WITH

GRATEFUL SENSE OF HIS KINDNESS, AND PRIDE IN HIS ESTEEM,

This Tragedy,

EMBODYING THE FEELINGS OF HAPPY DAYS,

SPENT IN THAT ROMANTIC LAND WHICH HIS DELIGHTFUL

SOCIETY HAS ENDEARED,

IS (WITH HIS PERMISSION) RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED

BY

T. N. TALFOURD.

ADVERTISEMENT

TO THE SECOND EDITION.

SINCE this Play was prepared for the press, it has undergone the ordeal of representation; and, having avowed myself its author, I feel it right to state the circumstances under which it was written and "commended to the stage." It was composed in the vacation of 1839, at Glandwr, in the most beautiful part of North Wales, chiefly for the purpose of embodying the feelings which the grandest scenery in the Highlands of Scotland had awakened, when I visited them in the preceding autumn. I had no distinct intention at that time of seeking for it a trial on the stage; but, having almost unconsciously blended with the image of its hero the figure, the attitudes, and the tones of the great actor, whom I had associated for many years with every form of tragedy, I could not altogether repress the hope that I might one day enjoy the delight of seeing him give life and reality to my imperfect conceptions. After my return to London the Play was printed, merely for the purpose of being presented to my friends; but when only two or three copies had been presented, I was encouraged to believe that it would one day be acted, and I suppressed the edition. I found that my friend, Mr. Charles Dickens,—whose generous devotion to my interests amidst his own triumphant labours, I am most happy thus to boast,—had shown it to Mr. Macready as the work of a stranger; that it had been read by him with deep interest; and that he had determined to recommend its production as the first novelty of the present Haymarket season. Having been charged, on the representation of "Ion," with obtaining an unfair advantage over other Dramatic authors, by the previous distribution of the Play, (although, at the time of that distribution, I had not the slightest idea that it would ever be acted,) I resolved wholly to abstain from a course which might justly involve me in such a censure; and the only use made of any of the

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A child, and plead to that unharden'd heart,
By all the long past hours of priceless love,
To let my gushing soul pass forth in grace,
And bless thee in its parting!

Ism. Never!

Thoas. [*rising.*] Yes!
Haste ere the roof shall fall, and crush the germ
Of sweet repentance in us: take thy seat,
And speak as thy heart dictates—

[*Drawing* ISMENE *towards her seat.*

Hear again!

Ism. Unhand me—rebel son! Assembled Chiefs,
Ye called me—I have spoken once—I speak
No more; make way there!—I must pass alone!

[*Exit* ISMENE.

Thoas. [*Calling to* ISMENE.] O! mother, stay! She's gone. [*Sinks into his chair.*

Iph. Her word decides,
Unless the gods disown it. Peace! the altar
Is silent; the last moment presses on us—
Hyllus, the doom'd, stand forth!

Creusa. O pause; to thee
Thoas, I call; thou know'st him guiltless.

Iph. Hold!
No mortal passion can have utterance here,
When fate is audible. To yield is ours;
Be calm as Hyllus, or forego his hand.

[CREUSA *sinks on her knees beside* HYLLUS; IPHITUS *lays one hand on the head of* HYLLUS, *and raises the other towards heaven.*

Iph. Dread Power, that bade us to this fane, accept
The expiation that we offer now,
And let this blood pour'd forth avert thy vengeance!

[THOAS *suddenly falls from his seat to the ground.* CREUSA *rushes to him, and all surround him.*

Creusa. Gods! what is this new horror?

[*Opening the vest of* THOAS, *the dagger, with which he has secretly stabbed himself, falls from it.*

Thoas. There! 'Tis done
'Tis well accomplish'd.
Creusa. Hyllus, go!
Brother, no more—for thee he perishes.
Thoas. I will not purchase a last thrill of joy,
By such estrangement. That steel bears the blood
Of Creon and his slayer!
—Raise me! So—
That I may press your generous monarch's hand.
Nay, turn not from me, Hyllus! Speak one word
Of sweet forgiveness.
Hyl. Had it pleased the Gods,
Instead of thine, to take a stripling's life,
How had that giddy sharpness been repaid
By mighty deeds thou wouldst have acted!
Thoas. No—
If I were framed by nature for dishonour,
I might have liv'd and conquer'd, and enjoy'd,
And won a glorious name;—my soul was noble—
And shiver'd at the shadow of its crime,
And clos'd on this world;—in another sphere
It may expand unsoil'd—it opens now—
And guilt is passing from me with my life-blood.

Enter CALCHAS.

Cal. The Queen!
Thoas. Hold life a moment—Speak!—The Queen?
Cal. She rush'd,
With looks none dared to question, to the cave;
Paused at its horrid portal; toss'd her arms
Wildly abroad; then drew them to her breast,
As if she clasp'd a vision'd infant there;
And as her eye, uplifted to the crag,
Met those who might prevent her course, withdrew
Her backward step amidst the deadly clouds
Which veil'd her—till the spectral shape was lost,
Where none dare ever tread to seek for that
Which was Ismene.

Thesa. Peace be with her! Penthesus,
Thy hand;—let Hyllus reign in honour here;—
Convey me to the city of my love;
Her future years of glory stream more clear
Than ever on my soul. O Athens! Athens! [*Dies.*

Hyl. Sister!

Creusa. Forgive me, brother.
[*Falls on the neck of* HYLLUS.

Hyl. Weep there; 'tis thy home.
Fate that has smitten us so young, leaves this—
That we shall cleave together to the grave.

The curtain falls.

GLENCOE:

OR,

THE FATE OF THE MACDONALDS.

A TRAGEDY, IN FIVE ACTS.

TO

LORD JEFFREY,

WITH

GRATEFUL SENSE OF HIS KINDNESS, AND PRIDE IN HIS ESTEEM,

This Tragedy,

EMBODYING THE FEELINGS OF HAPPY DAYS,

SPENT IN THAT ROMANTIC LAND WHICH HIS DELIGHTFUL

SOCIETY HAS ENDEARED,

IS (WITH HIS PERMISSION) RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED

BY

T. N. TALFOURD.

ADVERTISEMENT

TO THE SECOND EDITION.

Since this Play was prepared for the press, it has undergone the ordeal of representation; and, having avowed myself its author, I feel it right to state the circumstances under which it was written and "commended to the stage." It was composed in the vacation of 1839, at Glandwr, in the most beautiful part of North Wales, chiefly for the purpose of embodying the feelings which the grandest scenery in the Highlands of Scotland had awakened, when I visited them in the preceding autumn. I had no distinct intention at that time of seeking for it a trial on the stage; but, having almost unconsciously blended with the image of its hero the figure, the attitudes, and the tones of the great actor, whom I had associated for many years with every form of tragedy, I could not altogether repress the hope that I might one day enjoy the delight of seeing him give life and reality to my imperfect conceptions. After my return to London the Play was printed, merely for the purpose of being presented to my friends; but when only two or three copies had been presented, I was encouraged to believe that it would one day be acted, and I suppressed the edition. I found that my friend, Mr. Charles Dickens,—whose generous devotion to my interests amidst his own triumphant labours, I am most happy thus to boast,—had shown it to Mr. Macready as the work of a stranger; that it had been read by him with deep interest; and that he had determined to recommend its production as the first novelty of the present Haymarket season. Having been charged, on the representation of "Ion," with obtaining an unfair advantage over other Dramatic authors, by the previous distribution of the Play, (although, at the time of that distribution, I had not the slightest idea that it would ever be acted,) I resolved wholly to abstain from a course which might justly involve me in such a censure; and the only use made of any of the

printed copies, was to facilitate the rehearsals. I also determined if possible, to avoid another charge—that I was indebted for such success as I had obtained to the partial applause of friends; and, as the Play had been accepted without any name to aid it, so I wished that it should take its fair chance for success or failure, at the hands of an audience wholly without bias. This wish was accomplished; for, with the exception of two or three friends who happened to have received copies before the occasion for secrecy arose, my most intimate friends and relations were wholly unacquainted with my connection of the announcement of the evening. When the name of the author was communicated to Mr. Macready, he was enjoined to keep it secret; and it was only a day or two before the performance that an accident caused it even to be suspected at the theatre. Whatever, therefore, may have been the degree of success which attended its first representation, it was attained—not only without the issue of orders, but without the aid of those genial influences which friendship delights to exert on such an occasion.

As Mr. Macready has regarded this play in two aspects—at the time when he first approved it as the work of a stranger, and during its preparation for the Stage as the production of one of his oldest friends—so I have to thank him in each character. The suggestions which he made to render it better fitted for representation were so important, that it was found necessary to reprint the whole; and the few who have seen the original will perceive that they have essentially improved the work as a dramatic poem, as well as advanced its interest on the Stage. Of his representation of the principal character, I cannot speak in adequate terms of gratitude;—but those who know the pleasure which an author feels in finding the images of his solitary walks among rocks and streams rendered palpable to the senses and affections of others by the power of a great artist, may guess the feelings with which I witnessed his performance. To all the Ladies and Gentlemen engaged in the representation, I also beg to offer my cordial thanks for the zeal with which they did more than justice to parts which, in several instances, were unworthy of their powers; and to Mr. Webster, as Manager as well as Actor.

Under ordinary circumstances, I should have felt it impertinent to intrude on the public the statement I have made of personal details and motives; but as I am conscious that this Play has been produced at a time when dramatic productions superior to it in

many of the essentials of that species of composition have recently issued from the press, I think it due to the management of the Haymarket Theatre, and to Mr. Macready, to state the exact truth respecting it. The authors of some of these dramas cannot reasonably complain, as they have not chosen to adapt their works to the purposes of acting, that they have not been acted; but there are others who naturally and earnestly desire to participate in the fascinations of the acted Drama, whose wishes I should rejoice to see fulfilled. Two obstacles, however, subsist, which, while they continue, must confine the opportunities of doing justice to dramatic authors within narrow limits—the dearth of competent actors to represent their works, and the monopoly which restricts the number of theatres entitled to give them scope. Whether the removal of the last difficulty would tend speedily to obviate the first, is matter of conjecture: but the experiment ought to be and must be tried. The claims of our dramatic literature to a Free Stage are becoming every day more urgent with the development of its rich resources; and they cannot long be so advanced and so supported in vain.

PREFACE.

It seems strange that the terrible incident, which deepens the impression made on all tourists by the most awful Pass of the Highlands, should not have been long ago made the subject of poetry or romance. Although the massacre which casts so deep a stain on the government of King William the Third, may well have been regarded as too shocking for dramatic effect, unless presented merely in the remote back-ground of scenic action, it is surely matter of surprise that it should not have been selected as a subject for Scottish romance, by the great Novelist who has held up its authors to just execration in his "History of Scotland." A deed so atrocious, perpetrated towards the close of the seventeenth century, under the sanction of a warrant, both superscribed and subscribed by the king, is an instance of that projection of the savage state into a period of growing civilization which enables the novelist to blend the familiar with the fearful—"new manners" with "the pomp of elder days"—the fading superstition of dim antiquity with the realities which history verifies. To him, the treachery by which it was preceded—the mixture of ferocity and craft by which it was planned and executed—the fearful contrast between the gay reciprocation of social kindness, and the deadly purpose of the guests marking out their hosts for slaughter—present opportunities for the most picturesque contrasts, the most vivid details, the most thrilling suggestions, which are not within the province of the dramatist. The catastrophe has also a far-reaching interest, as showing the extermination of one of the most sturdy and austere, although one of the smallest of the Highland clans; for, being the most fearful of the series of measures by which the little sovereignties of the Highland Chiefs were abolished, it may well represent their general extinction, and the transfer of the virtues and the violence they sheltered from action to memory. It occurred in a scene, too,

which, for gloomy grandeur, is not only unequalled, but unapproached—perhaps, unresembled—by any other Pass in Britain; and its solemn features, especially when contemplated beneath heavy clouds and amidst rolling mists, harmonise with the story of the horrors which were wrought among them. Considering, therefore, the delight which Sir Walter Scott felt in animating the noblest scenery of his country with its most romantic traditions, it is difficult to account for his abstinence from a theme which, if adopted by him, would have been forever sacred from the touch of others.*

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* Two passages only, as far as the author is aware, in the poetry and fiction of Sir Walter Scott, contain allusions to the massacre at Glencoe; but they show how intensely he felt the atrocities committed under the apparent sanction at least of the government of King William. The following stanzas are quoted by himself from his own poems, in a note to his History:

"The hand that mingled in the meal,
At midnight drew the felon steel,
And gave the host's kind breast to feel
Meed for his hospitality!
The friendly hearth which warm'd that hand,
At midnight arm'd it with the brand
That bade destruction's flames expand
Their red and fearful blazonry.

"Then woman's shriek was heard in vain;
Nor infancy's unpitied pain,
More than the warrior's groan, could gain
Respite from ruthless butchery!
The winter wind that whistled shrill,
The snows that night that cloak'd the hill,
Though wild and pitiless, had still
Far more than Southron clemency."

The following passage occurs in the tale of the "Highland Widow," in Elspat's remonstrance to her son on his enlistment:—"Go, put your head under the belt of one of the race of Dermid, whose children murdered—yes," she added with a wild shriek, "murdered your mother's fathers in their peaceful dwellings in Glencoe! Yes," she again exclaimed with a wilder and shriller scream, "I was then unborn, but my mother has told me; and I attended to the voice of my mother;—well I remember her words!—They came in peace and were received in friendship, and blood and fire arose, and screams and murder!"

"Mother," answered Hamish, mournfully, but with a decided tone, "all that I have thought over—there is not a drop of the blood of Glencoe on the noble hand of Barcaldine;—with the unhappy house of Glenlyon the curse remains and on them God hath avenged it."

In endeavouring to present, in a dramatic form, the feelings which the scene and its history have engendered, it has been found necessary to place in the foreground domestic incidents and fictitious characters; only to exhibit the chief agents of the treachery, so far as essential to the progress of the action; and to allow the catastrophe itself rather to be felt as affecting the fortunes of an individual family, than exhibited in its extended horrors. The subject presents strong temptations to mere melo-dramatic effect: it has been the wish of the Author to resist these as much as possible; but he can scarcely hope with entire success.

In the outline of those incidents which are historical, the Author has not ventured on any material deviation from the story, as related in the Fifty-eighth Chapter of Sir Walter Scott's "History of Scotland," where it will be found developed with all the vividness of that master-spirit of narrative.* The rash irresolution of *Mac Ian*, in deferring his submission till the last moment; his journey to Fort-William in the snow-storm; his disappointment in finding he had sought the wrong officer; his turning thence, and passing near his own house, to Inverary, where he arrived after the appointed day; the acceptance of his oath by the sheriff of Argyle, and his return to enforce the allegiance of his clan to King William; the arrival of *Glenlyon* and his soldiers in the glen; their entertainment for fifteen days by the *Macdonalds*; the cold hypocrisy by which they veiled their purpose when urged to its execution by *Major Duncanson*; and the partial execution of the murderous orders; are all real features of "an ower true tale." The only deviations of which the Author is conscious are, the representing *Alaster Macdonald*, the younger son of *Mac Ian*, as a lad, instead of the husband of *Glenlyon's* niece; and that niece as fostered by the widow and son of a chief of the clan, once the rival of *Mac Ian*; and in substituting, for the foul traits of treachery which Sir Walter Scott imputes to *Glenlyon*, the incident of his procuring a young officer in his own regiment, but of the clan of the *Macdonalds*, to place the soldiers in the tracks leading from the valley they were commanded to surround. The character of *Halbert Macdonald*, and the incidents of his story and conduct, are entirely fictitious.

* By the obliging permission of Mr. Cadell, expressing the feelings of Sir Walter Scott's family, I have enriched the Appendix to this volume with the chief part of this stirring tale.

As the chief interest which the Author can hope that any will find in perusing this drama, will consist in its bringing to their minds the features of the stupendous glen to which it refers, he may be permitted to state, that the spot where the tower and chapel of *Halbert* are supposed to be placed, is beneath the summit of the great mountain *Bedin;* towards which a huge gully leads, or seems to lead, from the bed of the river, and where, enclosed amidst the black rocks, in the darkness of which that gully is lost, far above the glen *may* be the site of such a rude dwelling. The house of *Mac Ian* is supposed to be—where, no doubt, it was—in the lower and wider part of the glen, where, by the side of the Cona, the wild myrtle grows in great profusion, about two miles to the south-east of Loch Leven. In other respects, as far as vivid impressions, not verified for some time, enabled the Author, he has endeavoured to recall to the recollection of those who have visited Glencoe the subsisting features of its scenery; although he cannot place implicit confidence in those impressions, when he finds a writer like Pennant asserting of the glen, that "its mountains rise on each side perpendicularly to a great height from a flat narrow bottom; so that, in many places, they seem to hang over, and make approaches as they aspire towards each other." To his memory, Glencoe seems not a narrow defile, as this description would import, but a huge valley between mountains of rock, receding from each other till a field of air of several miles' breadth lies between their summits: of which, the last time he saw it, three young eagles, rising from the coarse heather at the head of the pass, near King's house, took and kept delighted possession.

PERSONS OF THE DRAMA.

MAC IAN, Chief of the Clan of the Macdonalds of Glencoe.

JOHN MACDONALD, eldest Son of MAC IAN.

ALASTER MACDONALD, youngest son of MAC IAN—a youth.

HALBERT MACDONALD, nephew of MAC IAN—Son of a deceased chief.

HENRY MACDONALD, younger brother of HALBERT.

ANGUS, } Old Men of the Clan of the Macdonalds of
DONALD, } Glencoe.

CAPT. ROBERT CAMPBELL of Glenlyon, commonly called GLENLYON, Captain of a detachment of the Earl of Argyle's Regiment.

LINDSAY, an officer under GLENLYON's command.

DRUMMOND, a Sergeant in the Regiment.

KENNETH, an Old Servant of MAC IAN.

A Catholic Priest.

LADY MACDONALD, Mother of HALBERT and HENRY.

HELEN CAMPBELL, an Orphan protected by LADY MACDONALD, Niece to GLENLYON.

Clansmen, Officers, Soldiers, &c.

SCENE—*Glencoe, and the neighbouring banks of Loch Leven.*

TIME—*January*, 1689.

The first Two Acts occupy one night and the following morning. There is an interval of a fortnight between the action of the Second and Third Acts;—the Third, Fourth and Fifth Acts comprise the action of the three succeeding days.

GLENCOE:

OR,

THE FATE OF THE MACDONALDS.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*The Hall in the House of* MAC IAN, *in Glencoe.*

Midnight.—A turf fire burning.—Storm heard without.—JOHN MACDONALD *discovered sitting pensively at a table;* ALASTER *pacing the room.*

John. LET me entreat you, Alaster, to sleep;
Three nights of feverish waking, at your age,
May spoil you for a watchman; for your nerves,
Undisciplined by care, throb many hours,
While those of elder and sedater spirits,
Ruled by the time, count one. Rest those slight limbs
On yonder couch of heather;—I would pledge
My word to rouse you at the first faint tread
Which may announce your father, but 'twere needless;
In deepest slumber it will stir your heart,
And rouse you to his arms.

Alas. How can I sleep?
How can you wish that I should sleep, when night
Succeeds to night, and still the unconquer'd wind,
Laden with snow and hailstones, dashes round us,
As if in scorn of Highlanders, content
To yield the fastnesses in which it held
Joint *empire with our* sires; and still the fear

That it hath dealt its vengeance on the head
We love increases,—with the time o'erpast
For sad and shameful travel?
John. Alaster,
I must not hear you blend those words with aught
Our sire resolved. You did not guess the war
Of fierce emotions that, within his frame
Unshaken, raged, as time brought nigh the hour
When he must plight his faith to England's King,
Or to the power of unrelenting foes
Yield up his clansmen. While the sky was clear,
With wavering purpose he inclined to wait
His doom at home; but when the snow-storm hurl'd
Its icy arrows through the hills, the woes
Of roofless desolation all would share
Shriek'd at his heart, and peril lent a show
Of honour to the journey, which had else
Seem'd shameful;—so he girt him to the task
As to a doom'd man's office. If we lose
All else, we will preserve our household laws;
Nor let the licence of these fickle times
Subvert the holy shelter which command
Of fathers, and undoubting faith of sons,
Rear'd for our shivering virtues. You o'erstep
The province of a Highland chieftain's son;
You must not judge your father.
Alas. It is true,
And I submit me to your chiding: still
'Tis hard to own new tyranny; to shrink
Before its threats; to feel the Highland heart
Shrivel and die within its case, nor strike
One blow for ancient sovereignty and honour.
John. I grant that it is hard; but if the blow
Be without hope, 'tis nobler to forbear,
Nor buy a glorious moment with the blood
Of trusting clansmen. Would you know what virtue
Endurance may possess, when action fails,
Look at our cousin Halbert!—To your eye,
Whose memory reaches not his fiery boyhood,
He seems distinguish'd only by that charm

Of courtesy which hearted kindness sheds
Through simplest manners, and an aspect grave
Which these huge rocks impress upon the port
Of him who loves them. You have often seen
Our father to his greeting make return
Of scoff or withering silence, which he hears
In gentlest mood;—yet once his soul was passion'd
With wilder rage than even your ardent youth
Can guess; but I err now; for I o'erstep
An old injunction not to tell his story,
Till manhood fitted you to hear it.

Alas. Manhood!

John. I did not mean to ruffle you. Your years,
Though few, have been instructed by distress,
And I admit your title to the cares
And knowledge happier fortunes had deferr'd.
Sit then, and listen. Halbert's father once
With ours contested who might claim descent
From eldest line of ancestry, and right
To chieftainship and lands. Fierce conflicts held
The claim in doubt, till old Macdonald fell
Stricken for death;—then, conscious that his sons,
Halbert, the eldest-born, about your age,
And Henry, a slight stripling, scarcely twelve,
Could ill sustain the quarrel, or protect
Their mother in her sorrow, sent the priest
Who shrived him, to entreat his rival's hand
In peace,—with offer to resign his claims:
So that the blacken'd tower in which he lay,
Its ruin'd chapel, the small niche of rock
In which they are embraced as in a chasm
Rent 'neath our loftiest peak by ancient storm,
And some scant pastures on Lock Leven's side,
Were ratified as Halbert's. To this pact
I was a witness, and the scene lives now
Before me.—In a room where flickering light
Strove through the narrow openings of huge walls,
On a low couch, Macdonald's massive form
Lay stretch'd;—with folded arms our father stood
Awed by the weakness of the foe so late

His equal; the expiring warrior raised
His head, and catching from the eager looks
Of the wan lady who had wiped the dew
Of anguish from his forehead, argument
To quell all scruple, solemnly rehearsed
The terms, and, as his dying prayer, implored
Halbert to keep them.
Alas. So he yielded?
John. No;
One flush of crimson from the hair which curl'd
Crisply around his brows, suffus'd his face
And throat outspread with rage;—he slowly raised
His dirk; and, though the agony which swell'd
His heaving breast prevented speech, we read
In his dilated nostril, eyes that flash'd
With fire that answer'd to the uplifted steel,
And lips wide-parted for the sounds which strove
In vain to reach their avenue, a vow
Of never-resting warfare;—so he stood
Rigid as marble, of his mother's face
Turn'd on him from her knees—of the wild fear
Which struck his gamesome brother sad,—of all
Unconscious. While we waited for his words,
Another voice, from the deep shade that gloom'd
Beyond the death-bed, came;—and midst it, stood
The squalid figure of a woman, wrought
Beyond the natural stature as she stretched
Her wither'd finger towards the youth, and spoke—
"*Halbert, obey! The hour which sees thee rule*
O'er the Macdonalds of Glencoe shall bring
Terror and death."—Then glided from the room.
He did not start, but as his ears drank in
The sounds, his colour vanish'd from his face;
The light forsook his eyes; his nerveless hand
Released the dirk; he sank on trembling knees
Beside the couch, and with a child's soft voice
Said, "I obey"—and bow'd his head to take
His father's blessing, who fell back and died
When he had murmur'd it. The youth arose
Sedate, and, turning to his mother, said,

"I live for you." Since then he has remain'd
What you have known him.
Alas. What was she who wrought
This awful change?
John. Have you not heard of Moina?
Although she has not since that day been seen
Within our vale, her awful figure glared
On the remotest infancy of men
Who now are reckoned old. Her age alone
Would make the obscurest thread of human life
Drawn out, through many births and deaths of Hope,
A thing to tremble at;—'tis said she gazed
On that best piece of heavenly workmanship—
Our Mary's beauty, when the shrivell'd Queen
Of England foully shatter'd it; some crime
Or mighty sorrow now forgotten drew
Her steps into deep solitude. Preserved
By her majestic bearing from the grasp
Of law, she owns the power to pierce the veil
Of mortal vision;—the sole tie she knows
To this world is a kindred with our race,
From which she sprung;—yet only giant griefs
Borne or foreshadowed have the power to stir
Her dull affections, or to invite her steps
From the rude hovel where she dwells alone
Far on the mountain plain, within the round
Of stones which point Death's ancient victories
O'er nameless heroes. Whether earnest thought
And long communion with the hills whose moan
Foretells the tempest, taught her first to break
The bondage of the Present, or worse aid
Hath given her might, I cannot tell; pray Heaven
That you may never cross her!
Alas. Her strange words
Fell lightly on the youngest son, whose acts
Of boyish prowess wrought in frolic mood
I once admired;—has anything been heard
Of that gay scapegrace?
John. No;—he could not brook
The dullness *of his* home, though not unchear'd

By female grace; for there the lovely child
Of brave Hugh Campbell, whom Macdonald loved,
Spite of the hatred that he bore his clan,
Has, from the opening of her youth's first blossom
Found shelter;—and no fairer Scotland boasts
Than Helen Campbell. If young Henry lives,
Be sure you'll find him on the sunny side
Of Fortune's favour.—Hark! The Cona's roar!
It bursts the icy chains which long have held it,
And riots in its freedom.

Alas. 'Twill destroy
The slender bridge below us. Should our Father
Approach that way!—I will not linger thus.

John. He bade me wait him here. Ho! Kenneth!
(*calling.*) Run

Enter KENNETH.

Swift to the bridge, it may be yours to save
Your chief. [*Exit* KENNETH.
His journey will not lie that way,
Yet horrors thicken round us. 'Mid the roar
Methinks I hear a step—it comes—alas!
'Tis not Mac Ian's.

Enter HALBERT MACDONALD.

Halbert, I have scarce
The power to bid you welcome as I ought;
We are sad watchers for our sire's return,
And almost blame the footsteps of a friend
Which might be his.

Hal. I came to ask of him;—
For having cross'd him on Loch Leven's shore
Three nights ago, scarce two miles hence, I heard
With wonder the report which found its way
To our lone dwelling but to-night, that still
He was abroad.

Alas. Are you assured 'twas he?
Did he address you?

Hal. Alaster, you know
How rarely he will grace me with a word;
But this is not a season for a thought,

Save of his peril. I had made my way,
Breasting the hurricane, in hope to lead
Our herd to shelter ere the night should add
Dark terrors to the storm; in blackening mist
I saw a mantle flicker; then the hairs
Of a white head, which stream'd along the wave
Of flying vapour; swift I ran to aid
Some aged wanderer's steps, and cried aloud.
He fled before me, till my fleeter limbs
O'ertook him; then he faced me;—'twas your father!
A look, in which strong anguish baffled scorn,
He fix'd upon me; waved his arm aloft,
In action that forbade pursuit, and took
The pathway to Loch Etive. I believed
He only wish'd to shun me, and that done,
He would turn homeward.

Alas. If indeed 'twas he,
And not a dreadful shadow of his mould:
He fears to meet the faces of his friends
After his oath to William.

Hal. If he lives,
That oath is past; and being past, dear cousin,
Let it not prompt a word which may add pangs
To a brave spirit's shame. At earliest dawn
I'll search each cavern'd nook within our glen,
Nor leave a crevice which the smallest rill
Has hollow'd, unexplored. I know them well:
So haply I may find the reverend chief
Crouch'd in some narrow cave,—his stately head
In resignation bow'd upon his staff,
And waiting, without struggle, the last chill
Of slowly freezing death;—may lead him home,
And win one cordial pressure of his hand,
To speak he owns me true.

John. A footstep!—hush!

Enter ANGUS.

John. Angus at such an hour!

Angus. A fearful summons
From a shrill voice, between the tempest's gusts,
Call'd *me to meet* my chief.

John. Would he were here!
He comes even now [*listening*]. No.

Enter DONALD.

John. This is terrible!
Donald. Is not Mac Ian here? I came to meet him;
Roused from my bed by such a piercing cry
As rarely syllables a human name!
John. You hear!

Other old Clansmen *enter.*

John. I ask not why you come: I know
Some mortal tidings linger on the storm,
And ye are here to share them. Let them come:
We can but die!
Hal. Heaven fit us to endure!
John. Another step; I know it well;—'t is his!
Pray you withdraw awhile; but go not hence.

[HALBERT *and the* Clansmen *retire to the end of the room.*

Enter MAC IAN.

Mac I. Still watching?—you too, Alaster? What care
My absence must have brought you! My dear sons,
Do not despise your father, who returns
The subject of King William.
John. All you do
Must have our reverence. Let me bring you wine.
Mac I. No; it would choke me. I must drain no more
The goblet to assuage the patriot glow
Of love and pride; I may not drink to Him
Whose ancestry my own revered; and wine
Were poison to me now.
Alas. Is all then past?
Mac I. It is; and sad as was the task, the way
Was worthy of its end. When through deep snow
I reach'd Fort-William, nerved to take the oath
Before the General,—I was told his office
Did not allow him to record it: thence
I was compell'd to struggle through the storm
To Inverary, where the Sheriff deign'd,

Although beyond the appointed time, to seal
The degradation of our race. I pass'd
Within two miles of this beloved home,
And dared not turn to it.
Hal. [*speaking to* ANGUS *behind*]. 'Twas there I met him.
Mac I. Who spoke? Is he who track'd me in the storm
Come as a spy, upon my sad return,
To gaze upon my sorrow? Let him face me!
Hal. [*coming forward.*] I came not to offend you.
John. No;—he came
In terror for your safety.
Mac I. Said he so?
Nay, Halbert, look yourself; scant powers are left
To grace the seat you wait for, yet my son
Shall fill it after me. Declare your wish
To rend it from us;—'twere a nobler course
Than that you follow.
Hal. Sir, you do me wrong;
I boast no virtue when I claim content
With that which you have left me;—would not change
My naked turret, in its mountain hold,
Reach'd by the path along whose rugged steeps
Discord and envy climb not, for the fields
Rich Inverary in its scornful groves
Embosoms; and to me the mouldering walls
Of its small chapel wear the glory yet
Of consecration which they took from prayers
Of the first teachers, though a thousand storms
Have drench'd and shaken them. Forgive me, sir:
I have a patrimony which forbids
Envy of yours.
Mac I. You hear—he taunts me now;—
Do you believe that show of meekness cheats
A soldier's eye?—that we esteem your thoughts
Subdued to habits of a herdsman's life,
And all the passion and the pride of youth
In these o'ercome?
Hal. I strive to conquer them,
And not in vain. You think that strange. If day
Illumed the glen, I'd show you, from your door,

A shapeless rock, which, thence observed, presents
No mark to give it preference o'er the mass
Of mountain ruin; yet from upward gaze
Of the slow traveller, as he drags his steps
Through yon dark pass, it shuts the mighty gorge
Above with all its buttresses; its lake,
Black with huge shadows; and its jagged heights,
Which tempt the arrowy lightning from its track
To sport with kindred terrors. So, by grace
Of Heaven, each common object we regard
With steadiness, can veil the dark abodes
Of terrible Remembrance at whose side
Fierce Passions slumber, and supply to Hope
The place of airiest pinnacles it shades.
Thus, sir, it is with me.

John. Believe it, father;
Indeed 't is true.

Mac I. Perhaps I do you wrong;
We'll speak of this to-morrow, when I meet
The eldest clansmen, and with shame, enforce
Their new allegiance.

John. They await you now.

Mac I. Here?—I must face them;—tell them to approach.

[MAC IAN *takes his seat;*—JOHN *beckons the old* Clansmen, *who surround it.*

Mac I. I have cold welcome for you, friends; you
To share the wreck of the Macdonalds. I, [come
The most unhappy of the race, have been
To make the final sacrifice. I felt
Resistance, with our deaths, would glut the hate
Of Scottish minions bribed by England's gold;
And I have sworn——relate it for me, John,
I cannot tell it!

John. To secure your lives
My father perill'd his;—and yesternight,
At Inverary, pledged our faith to William.

Enter KENNETH *wildly.*

Ken. **Too late! too late!**

Hal. What mean those awful words?
Is all this anguish vain?
Ken. [*seeing* MAC IAN.] No, he is safe!
Why start ye—though the bridge is swept away,
Our chief's unharm'd.
Hal. And thus you welcome him,
With words which freeze the soul! You meant no ill;
Yet death is in your words.
Ken. [*kneeling to* MAC IAN.] Forgive me.
Mac I. Rise;
I'm arm'd for any ill, unless it fall
On these, my life's last comforts.
[*Looking on* JOHN *and* ALASTER.
Hal. Sir, farewell!
When peril comes—as come it will—regard
The meanest clansman's life less cheap than his
Whose loyalty you wrong. [*Exit* HALBERT.
Mac I. [*to the* Clansmen.] Good night, my friends.
[*Exeunt* KENNETH *and* Clansmen.
Come near me, children;—I can scarcely bear
To look into your faces. You forgive me?
John. Forgive! We honour and revere you. Bless us!
[JOHN *and* ALASTER *kneel, one on each side of* MAC IAN'S *chair. He lays his hands on their heads.*
Mac I. There;—we are knotted now to live or die.
[*The Drop Scene falls.*

ACT II.

SCENE I.—*The Hall of Halbert's Tower. Time—Daybreak.*

Enter LADY MACDONALD *with a Letter, followed by* DRUMMOND, *in the uniform of the Earl of Argyle's Regiment.*

Lady M. Thanks for your pains. Let me devour again
The precious characters. [*Reads.*] "I come, dear mother,
Raised to high favour and command, to take
My quarters in your vale." The morn's faint light
Had scarce enabled eyes less glad than mine

To read;—they are dazzled now. [*To the* Soldier.] Pray
We have poor entertainment to bestow, [you go in:
But our best cheer is yours.
Drum. I must return
Upon the instant; shall I bear your answer?
Lady M. There is no need; he speeds; his eager
If I may judge it by my own, will add [wish,
Wings to his swiftness. Yet a moment stay;
Know you the writer of these lines, my son,—
Is he of gallant port?
Sol. Our regiment's pride,
And first in favour of Glenlyon.
Lady M. Take
A happy mother's thanks. [*Exit* Soldier.
I shall behold
A hero whom I parted from a child;
Trace in his lineaments the hints which gave
Sweet promise of his manhood; shall enjoy
In one rich hour the pleasures which are spread
Through years to her who watches the degrees
Of youth's expanding brightness. Where is Halbert?
Where Helen? She will laugh with wildest glee
To find her little playmate a plumed soldier,
And share his mirth. No gaiety like his
Has cheer'd her since he left us. She is here.

Enter HELEN CAMPBELL.

Helen. So early raised to meet the morning's chill?
Lady M. I feel no chill; the ecstacy within me
Clothes all without with summer; you shall share
In joy which seldom visits these old walls.
Helen. O say not so;—there's not a day but bears
Its blessing on its light. If Nature doles
Her gifts with sparing hand, their rareness sheds
Endearments her most bounteous mood withholds
From greenest valleys. The pure rill which casts
Its thread of snow-like lustre o'er the rock,
Which seems to pierce the azure sky, connects
The thoughts of earth with heaven, while mightier floods
Roar of dark passions. The rare sunbeam wins
For a most slight existence human care,

While it invests some marble heap with gleams
Of palaced visions. If the tufts of broom
Where Fancy weaves a chain of gold, appear,
On nearer visitation, thinly strewn,
Each looks a separate bower, and offers shade
To its own group of fairies. The prized harebell
Wastes not its dawning azure on a bank
Rough and confused with loveliness, but wears
The modest story of its gentle life
On leaves that love has tended; nay, the heath,
Which, slowly from a stinted root, unfolds
Pale lilac blossoms,—image of a maid
Rear'd in a solitude like this,—is bless'd
Instead of sharing with a million flowers
One radiant flush,—in offering its faint bloom
To loving eyes. Say not again, dear lady,
That Joy but seldom visits these old walls.
Lady M. Not while they shelter you, my lovely child;
But new Joy waits us; you have not forgotten
Our careless Henry;
Helen. No!—forgotten Henry!
But he has long forgotten us; no message
Has told us of his welfare, since he found us
Too sad for his companions.
Lady M. Pardon in him,
As I do, young ambition's upward gaze,
Which, fixed upon the future, cannot turn
To glance upon the distant and the past.
Helen. Is it indeed so, madam?
Lady M. You are grave now—
You who are joyous in our weariest days
Be glad; for Henry will this day return
To charm us with his merriment.
Helen. To-day?
Henry return to-day! Speak once again
That blessed news.
Lady M. He comes to-day, upraised
In Argyle's regiment to command, and graced
With favour of Glenlyon.
Helen. Of my uncle?

I think of him unseen, as a stern soldier
Who, living to obey and to command,
Allows no impulses but these which guide
Along the rocky, strait, untinted channel,
That discipline has hewn. If Henry wins
Favour from him, he'll win the hearts of all.
Comes he alone?

Lady M. His troop is quarter'd with us;
To taste in peace our humble Highland fare,
And feel our Highland welcome. But I long
For Halbert's presence; though he does not love
The clansmen of Argyle, he must rejoice
In Henry's fortune.

Helen. He has not return'd
Since yestere'en, he left us to inquire
The issue of Mac Ian's journey.

Lady M. You
Alarm me;—not return'd?

Helen. Fear not for Halbert;
You know he loves to wander at all hours,
And, ever present to himself, will rule
His course in safety. Is that he? The step
Is hurried, yet it should be his.

Enter HALBERT, *greatly agitated;—Throws himself into a seat.*

Lady M. My son,
What ails you? Speak!

Hal. I will—soon—presently;
Ha! Mother! Helen! safe;—thank Heaven! Has [nothing
To-night appall'd you?

Lady M. Nothing.

Hal. That is strange.

Lady M What has befallen us? Is Mac Ian dead?

Hal. No; he survives; he has only lost the thing
Which makes life precious!—Ruin yawns for all—
Poor fated clansmen! I have heard again
Old Moina's voice.

Lady M. Her voice who spake when death—

Hal. (*laying his hand on her arm*). Mother!

Lady M. He shivers as with ague. Speak, my son!

Hal. Yes—it is over now.—I'll tell you all,

"I live for you." Since then he has remain'd
What you have known him.
Alas. What was she who wrought
This awful change?
John. Have you not heard of Moina?
Although she has not since that day been seen
Within our vale, her awful figure glared
On the remotest infancy of men
Who now are reckoned old. Her age alone
Would make the obscurest thread of human life
Drawn out, through many births and deaths of Hope,
A thing to tremble at;—'tis said she gazed
On that best piece of heavenly workmanship—
Our Mary's beauty, when the shrivell'd Queen
Of England foully shatter'd it; some crime
Or mighty sorrow now forgotten drew
Her steps into deep solitude. Preserved
By her majestic bearing from the grasp
Of law, she owns the power to pierce the veil
Of mortal vision;—the sole tie she knows
To this world is a kindred with our race,
From which she sprung;—yet only giant griefs
Borne or foreshadowed have the power to stir
Her dull affections, or to invite her steps
From the rude hovel where she dwells alone
Far on the mountain plain, within the round
Of stones which point Death's ancient victories
O'er nameless heroes. Whether earnest thought
And long communion with the hills whose moan
Foretells the tempest, taught her first to break
The bondage of the Present, or worse aid
Hath given her might, I cannot tell; pray Heaven
That you may never cross her!
Alas. Her strange words
Fell lightly on the youngest son, whose acts
Of boyish prowess wrought in frolic mood
I once admired;—has anything been heard
Of that gay scapegrace?
John. No;—he could not brook
The dullness *of his* home, though not unheed'd

Helen. Surely there's one
Who owns that clan, you would not spurn!
Hal. Sweet girl!
Your beauty, early sever'd from its stem,
And planted in an honest soil, retains
No vestige of its origin. [*The music is heard approaching.*
Yet nearer!
Look not on me with those beseeching eyes; [*To* HELEN.
I *will* enjoy it; *'tis* a gallant strain:
See, Helen, how you mould me;—I can smile now.
Helen. And you *shall* smile; while you have been enthrall'd
By dismal fancies, we have heard sweet news
Of our long-sigh'd-for Henry.
Hal. Of my brother?
Shall we embrace him soon?
Helen. We hope to-day.
Hal. Then I will cast all sadness from my thoughts,
And own these portents idle;—my fair brother,
Who in staid manhood made me feel a child,
While I instructed him with tiny arm
To brave the torrent to its whirling pool
O'er rocky ledge descending! I am a boy
Again in thinking of it.

Enter HENRY MACDONALD *in the dress of an officer of the Earl of Argyle's regiment;* HALBERT *starts and stands apart;* LADY MACDONALD *eagerly embraces* HENRY.

Lady M. O, most welcome!
Hal. [*apart.*] A soldier of Argyle! a purchased slave
To his poor country's foes! Would he had lain,
In all the glory of his youth, a corpse,
Or I had died first!
Helen (*laying her hand imploringly on* HALBERT'S).
Halbert, speak to him.
Hal. Yes;—I'll not dash that bonnet from his brow;
Right, right—I'll speak to him. My brother!
[HENRY *embraces* HALBERT, *who receives him coldly.*
Hen. Stiff
And melancholy grown! These rugged walls

Save of his peril. I had made my way,
Breasting the hurricane, in hope to lead
Our herd to shelter ere the night should add
Dark terrors to the storm; in blackening mist
I saw a mantle flicker; then the hairs
Of a white head, which stream'd along the wave
Of flying vapour; swift I ran to aid
Some aged wanderer's steps, and cried aloud.
He fled before me, till my fleeter limbs
O'ertook him; then he faced me;—'twas your father!
A look, in which strong anguish baffled scorn,
He fix'd upon me; waved his arm aloft,
In action that forbade pursuit, and took
The pathway to Loch Etive. I believed
He only wish'd to shun me, and that done,
He would turn homeward.

Alas. If indeed 'twas he,
And not a dreadful shadow of his mould:
He fears to meet the faces of his friends
After his oath to William.

Hal. If he lives,
That oath is past; and being past, dear cousin,
Let it not prompt a word which may add pangs
To a brave spirit's shame. At earliest dawn
I'll search each cavern'd nook within our glen,
Nor leave a crevice which the smallest rill
Has hollow'd, unexplored. I know them well:
So haply I may find the reverend chief
Crouch'd in some narrow cave,—his stately head
In resignation bow'd upon his staff,
And waiting, without struggle, the last chill
Of slowly freezing death;—may lead him home,
And win one cordial pressure of his hand,
To speak he owns me true.

John. A footstep!—hush!

Enter ANGUS.

John. Angus at such an hour!

Angus. A fearful summons
From a shrill voice, between the tempest's gusts,
Call'd *me to meet* my chief.

Disgraceful to the officers I serve,
And though my brother, you shall answer it.
Hal. You make me smile now. I will answer it.
I must have speedy speech with you, where none
Shall break upon us.
Henry. At my earliest leisure.
[*To* LADY MACDONALD.
Mother, my duty calls me hence awhile,
To hear my captain's orders. Helen, soon
I shall reclaim old friendship.
[*Apart to* HALBERT.] In an hour,
Upon Loch Leven's margin, 'neath the shade
Of the first rock, expect me.
Hal. Do not fail. [*Exit* HENRY.
Lady M. Come, Helen, let us see the tower prepared
To feast our noble soldier and his friends.
Is he not all a mother's hope could image?
Helen. He is indeed;—at first he scarcely knew me;
Changed as he is, I had not mistaken him
Among a host of heroes!
[*Exeunt* HELEN *and* LADY MACDONALD.
Hal. [*alone.*] Down, wild rage!
These rebel passions ought to fright me more
Than night's grim phantoms. I had deem'd my temper
Proof 'gainst all griefs, all injuries, all scorns;
But this—my brother self-sold to our foes!—
I must be conqueror still.
[*Looks out.*]
O, blessed star
Of morning, do you wait upon that cone
Whose whiteness mocks our marble, to renew
The calm thy fields of azure can impart
To thoughts of earth's brief struggles? Linger yet!
It sinks; 'tis gone; its peace is in my soul.
[*Exit* HALBERT.

SCENE II.—*A Room in a Highland House.*

Sentinels seen pacing before the Windows—GLENLYON LINDSAY, *and other Officers of Argyle's Regiment.*

Glen. These are rough quarters for the winter, friends;
But let us make them jocund—find the huts
Which yield the warmest shelter from the snow,
And let our stores of wine and brandy pay
The courtesies we win. 'Tis easy service.
Lind. Is nothing more intended here than feasting?
Glen. Lindsay, I fain would hope not; we shall wait
For final orders, Now, our duty's plain.—
To win the favour of our hosts;—if more
Should be commanded, 'twill be ours to do it.

Enter HENRY MACDONALD.

Glen. You know this glen, Macdonald: to your charge
I leave disposal of the soldiers; place them
Where frankest entertainment will be given.
Henry. The entertainment may be coarse, but given
With heartiest welcome. I shall grant a boon
To every clansman in whose hut I place
One of my gallant comrades.
Glen. See all lodged,
And then report to me. This hut be mine.
Henry. May I retire? I must redeem a pledge
Within this hour.
Glen. An old acquaintance found?
You have my leave, sir. [*Exit* HENRY.
Some one knocks; attend;
Who waits?

Enter DRUMMOND.

Drum. Mac Ian's sons are at the door,
And ask to see you.
Glen. Ha!—of course admit them.
[*Exit* DRUMMOND.
The children of the stubborn chief who dared
Accuse our loftiest nobles that they filch'd
The money sent to buy the peace of Scotland!
I'd thank him for a brawl. Your pleasure with me?

Enter JOHN *and* ALASTER.

John. We bear Mac Ian's greeting to Glenlyon;
He trusts you come in friendship, now his oath
To William is recorded.
Glen. How! recorded?
Alas. Yes; by the Sheriff of Argyle. We tell
The fact, not boast it.
Glen. You speak boldly, sir;
A spirited young Highlander, i' faith:
Let me enlist you in our troop; we teach
Some manners that you lack.
Alas. And let me lack them,
Ere I endure your teaching.
John. Alaster!
Forbear.
Glen. O, let him speak. The oath is taken?
John. It is: though the appointed day had pass'd,
Yet, as mere error and the storm produced
The slight delay, it was forgiven.
Glen. Well!
Your father acted prudently at last:
Within you'll taste some wine, and tell me how
His journey prosper'd
John. Sir, you have not made
Reply to my sole question;—do you come
To visit us in friendship?
Glen. Friendship? Surely—
Fort-William's garrison, too small to hold
Our regiment, sends us beggars to request
Your hospitable greetings.
John. They are yours,
And all our glen can offer shall attend them.
Glen. Your hand. [*To* ALASTER.] And yours;—
you'll be a soldier yet. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE III.—*The Banks of Loch Leven.*

Enter HENRY.

Henry. First at the place!—the morning's chill;—
The quarrel were with other than the man [I wish

Although beyond the appointed time, to seal
The degradation of our race. I pass'd
Within two miles of this beloved home,
And dared not turn to it.

Hal. [*speaking to* ANGUS *behind*]. 'Twas there I met him.

Mac I. Who spoke? Is he who track'd me in the storm
Come as a spy, upon my sad return,
To gaze upon my sorrow? Let him face me!

Hal. [*coming forward.*] I came not to offend you.

John. No;—he came
In terror for your safety.

Mac I. Said he so?
Nay, Halbert, look yourself; scant powers are left
To grace the seat you wait for, yet my son
Shall fill it after me. Declare your wish
To rend it from us;—'twere a nobler course
Than that you follow.

Hal. Sir, you do me wrong;
I boast no virtue when I claim content
With that which you have left me;—would not change
My naked turret, in its mountain hold,
Reach'd by the path along whose rugged steeps
Discord and envy climb not, for the fields
Rich Inverary in its scornful groves
Embosoms; and to me the mouldering walls
Of its small chapel wear the glory yet
Of consecration which they took from prayers
Of the first teachers, though a thousand storms
Have drench'd and shaken them. Forgive me, sir:
I have a patrimony which forbids
Envy of yours.

Mac I. You hear—he taunts me now;—
Do you believe that show of meekness cheats
A soldier's eye?—that we esteem your thoughts
Subdued to habits of a herdsman's life,
And all the passion and the pride of youth
In these o'ercome?

Hal. I strive to conquer them,
And not in vain. You think that strange. If day
Illumed the glen, I'd show you, from your door,

And makes the loser glorious. Not for me
The sullen pride of mouldering battlements,
Or rites of tottering chapels.
Hal. Is it so?
Is ancient sanctity, which sheds its grace
Upon the infant's sportiveness, and cleaves
To the old warrior when he falls, a thing
To mock at? But I wrong you there: I know
Your heart then spoke not. I could cherish pride
In your gay valour, if a generous cause
Had won its aid;—nay, deeming Scotland lost,
If you had sought your fortune at the court
Of England, I had borne it;—but to join
With these domestic traitors—men who know
The rights they sell; who understand the ties
Which, through the wastes of centuries, cement
Our clans, and give the sacred cord one life
Of reverential love; for whom these hills
On the clear mirror of their childhood cast
Great shadows: who have caught their martial rage
From deeds of Wallace and of Bruce, and learn'd
To temper and enrage it with the sense
Of suffering beauty, which from Mary's fate
Gleams through dim years; and who conspire to crush
These memories in men's souls, and call the void
They make there, *freedom*—is a deed to weep for!
Henry. I may not hear the comrades whom I love
Thus slander'd.
Hal. You *shall* hear me while I speak
Of that which nearly touches you, as one
Of a small—branded—poor—illustrious race;
Who boast no fertile pastures; no broad lake (2)
Studded with island woods, which makes the soul
Effeminate with richness, like the scenes
In which the baffled Campbells hid their shame,
And scorned their distant foes. Our boasts are few,
Yet great;—a stream which thunders from its throne,
As when its roar was mingled with the voice
Of eldest song, from age to age retain'd
In human hearts;—wild myrtles which preserve

Hal. What mean those awful words?
Is all this anguish vain?
Ken. [*seeing* MAC IAN.] No, he is safe!
Why start ye—though the bridge is swept away,
Our chief's unharm'd.
Hal. And thus you welcome him,
With words which freeze the soul! You meant no ill;
Yet death is in your words.
Ken. [*kneeling to* MAC IAN.] Forgive me.
Mac I. Rise;
I'm arm'd for any ill, unless it fall
On these, my life's last comforts.
[*Looking on* JOHN *and* ALASTER.
Hal. Sir, farewell!
When peril comes—as come it will—regard
The meanest clansman's life less cheap than his
Whose loyalty you wrong. [*Exit* HALBERT.
Mac I. [*to the* Clansmen.] Good night, my friends.
[*Exeunt* KENNETH *and* Clansmen.
Come near me, children;—I can scarcely bear
To look into your faces. You forgive me?
John. Forgive! We honour and revere you. Bless us!
[JOHN *and* ALASTER *kneel, one on each side of* MAC IAN'S *chair. He lays his hands on their heads.*
Mac I. There;—we are knotted now to live or die.
[*The Drop Scene falls.*

ACT II.

SCENE I.—*The Hall of Halbert's Tower. Time—Daybreak.*

Enter LADY MACDONALD *with a Letter, followed by* DRUMMOND, *in the uniform of the Earl of Argyle's Regiment.*

Lady M. Thanks for your pains. Let me devour again
The precious characters. [*Reads.*] "I come, dear mother,
Raised to high favour and command, to take
My quarters in your vale." The morn's faint light
Had scarce enabled eyes less glad than mine

You love so well, I might have own'd a tie
To bind me to your wishes; you resign'd them;
What can these mountains yield to one who owns
Mac Ian as their lord?
Hal. The power to bear
That bitter taunt—which yet I feel!—O Henry!
Was that well said?
Henry. You should not have provoked it
By slanders on my officers and friends.
Hal. Your friends! Poor youth! companionship in mirth
Ungraced by thought, makes shallow friends; and yours
Are worse than shallow—they are false.
Henry. Nay, this
I will not bear; draw, sir!
[HENRY *draws his sword, and rushes on* HALBERT, *who dashes it from his hand.*
Hal. Take up your sword;
See how a bad cause makes a brave arm weak
Blush not; 't was but in pastime.
Henry. Kill me now,
And walk the hills in pride!
Hal. Too plain I see
Our paths diverge; but let us not forget
That we have trod life's early way together,
Hand clasp'd in hand. How proud was I to watch
Your youngest darings, when I saw you dive
To the deep bottom of the lake beneath us,
Nor draw one breath till in delight you rose
To laugh above it; when I traced the crags
By which with lightest footstep you approach'd
The eaglet's bed; and when you slipp'd, yet knew
No paleness, bore you in my trembling arms
To yon black ridge, from which in the cold thaw
The snow wreath melts, as infancy's pure thoughts
Have vanish'd from your soul.
Henry. No—Halbert—no!
Graceless I shook them from it, but they crowd
Here at your voice.
Hal. And you will not forget us?

Go, then, where fortune calls you, loved and praised—
Let not the ribald licence of a camp
Insult the griefs of Scotland. 'Mid the brave
Be bravest; and when honours wait your grasp,
Allow a moment's absence to your heart
While it recalls one lonely tower, whose doors
Would open to you were you beggar'd, shamed,
Forsaken;—and beside whose once-loved hearth
Your praises shall awaken joy more fervent
Than nobler friends can guess at. Ah! you weep—
My own true brother still!

Henry. I am! I am! [*They embrace.*

Enter HELEN.

Helen. Forgive me that I follow'd you. I saw
Both ruffled at your parting; but my fears
Never suggested an event so sad,
As that two brothers, from whose swords alone
We hope protection, should direct their points
Against each other's lives.

Henry. You must not leave
This spot with the belief that Halbert shares
The blame of this encounter; mine the fault,
Be mine the shame.

Hal. I will not let you pour
On Helen's ear one word of self-reproach;
You'll not believe him shamed?

Helen. Indeed, I will not;
I feel that shame and Henry are disjoin'd
As yonder summits. [*To* HENRY.
I must teach your steps
The pleasant pathways which we used to tread
In old sweet times. [*Takes his hand.*

Hal. [*Apart.*] It cannot be she means
Other than sisterly regard in this;
'Tis but the frankness of a courteous heart.
No more—no more.

Helen. [*To* HALBERT.] Will you not walk with us?
I have a hand for you, too.

Hal. Nothing else?

Helen. Yes; and a heart—a grateful one. So solemn!
Nay, you must smile; this is a day of joy,
And shall be cloudless. Hark! the music calls us.
[*Martial Music at a distance.*
Hal. Those strains again! Forgive me. Let us home.
[*Exeunt.*

ACT III.*

SCENE 1.—*The Quarters of Glenlyon.*

Enter GLENLYON *and* LINDSAY.

Glen. Are you not weary of your quarters, Lindsay?
Lind. Not I;—I care but little where I lodge.
Glen. These fifteen days among the snows will nerve
Our soldiers to encounter a campaign
In coldest winter. Do they bear it bravely?
Lind. Bear it? The rogues exult in it! Rude plenty
And loosen'd discipline make rich amends
For rations duly meted, and warm shelter,
The garrison affords. Our savage hosts
Have open'd their rock-cellar'd stores of ale,
And of the luscious juice from honey press'd,
Which the wild bee from scanty heather wins
To make us jocund! laughter and the dance
Have shaken many a hovel. May I ask
If we are destined long to dally thus?
Glen. I know not, Lindsay; what our mission was
You heard;—I scarcely dare remember it;
I, who have ever held my conduct true
To orders, as my pistol to my touch,
And feel these fastnesses are unsubdued
While a fierce clan like this retains its show
Of unity and ancient right, recoil
From that which we may execute. But thus

* *A fortnight is supposed to elapse between the Second and Third Acts.*

We must not loiter; every social cup—
Each pressure of the hand, will make our work
Harder and darker. I will send at once
To Duncanson; perchance Mac Ian's oath
Accepted by the Sheriff, though so late,
May save him. There's a mournful courtesy
In this old chief, crest-fall'n but self-sustain'd,
Which urges me to wish it.
Lind. He is crafty,
But yet most daring: never will the Highlands
Know peace while he infests them.
Glen. [*writing.*] Wound not him
With the sharp tongue on whom your sword may deal;
I will despatch Macdonald: can you tell
Where I may find him?
Lind. No: but I am sure
He's pleasantly engaged; for I have met him
Often, since we have lodged here, with a lady
Gracing his arm, whom a slight glance approves
Of rarest beauty. But he comes to make
His own report.

Enter HENRY MACDONALD.

Glen. 'Tis well, sir, you have come:
You have but seldom sought my orders here;
And but that I am told you have fair plea
For such remissness, I might censure it.
At present I require to know the name
And station of the damsel who has drawn
So true an officer from duty.
Henry. Sir,
My home was in this glen, and I live here
Beneath my brother's roof.
Glen. Nay, no evasion;
Tell me at once to whom I owe your absence,
Or hope no favour.
Henry. If I had not fear'd
The old estrangement which the father caus'd
Might touch the daughter, I had long ere this
Sought for her your protection. She is the child

Of your slain brother, from your love so long
Unhappily divided.
Glen. I knew not
That he had left a daughter.
Henry. When he died,
You were abroad; and she, an infant, found
A sire in mine.
Glen. Poor girl, to find her here
At such a moment!—but she shall be cared for.
Henry. Cared for!
Glen. Yes—cared for;—said I something strange
Is 't strange that I should care for her? To business:—
You are swift of foot, and know the jagged paths
Among these hills. [*Gives a letter.*
Bear this to Duncanson,
And bring his answer with your best despatch:
When you return, we 'll talk of my fair niece,
The partner of your rambles. I'll find means
To honour and reward you. Lindsay, come. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.—*A Room in Halbert's Tower.*

Enter LADY MACDONALD *and* HELEN.

Lady M. Helen, how grave you are! While winter stretch'd
Its dull eventless length, your ready mirth
Streak'd the dark hours with gaiety, which else
Had been unvaried gloom. Now that our snows
Glitter with dancing feathers and bright plaids,
Our echoes learn to laugh, and our rough paths
Are cheer'd by tales of love, you droop and sigh!
Does any secret grief afflict my child?
Helen. Grief, Madam! 'Tis the pensiveness of joy,
Too deep for language, too serene for mirth,
Makes me seem sad. To meet in manhood's bloom
The gallant playmate of my childhood; propp'd
On the same arm to tread the same wild paths;
And in sweet fellowship of memories, feel
Hour after hour of long-forgotten pleasure
Start forth in sunny vividness to break

The mist of heavy years,—is joy so hearted
That it can find no colour in the range
Of gladness to express it;—so accepts
A solemn hue from grief.
Lady M. Have you then felt
Those years so heavy; you have help'd to make
So light to me? Your lodging has been bleak,
Your entertainment scanty; yet your youth
Has been so furnish'd with rich thoughts, so raised
To lofty contemplations, that my pride
In the bright valour of my younger son
Cannot prevent my wonder that the hours
In which my Halbert with delighted care
Has minister'd to your soul's noblest thirsts,
Should be thus soon forgotten.
Helen. Not forgotten,
Nor have the years been heavy: when I said so,
I was most thankless. Pardon me, sweet lady,
But when with Henry, I recall old times,
I look across the intervening years
As a low vale in which fair pastures lie
Unseen, to gaze upon a sunlit bank
On which my childhood sported, and which grows
Near as I watch it. If his nature seems
Unsoften'd by reflection,—like a rock
Which draws no nurture from the rains, nor drinks
The sunbeam in that lights it, yet sustains
A plume of heather,—it is crown'd with grace
Which wins the heart it shelters.
Lady M. My dear Halbert,
How will you bear this?
Helen. Can it be, you fear
My joy in Henry's presence should afflict
A soul so great as Halbert's?
Lady M. I do fear it;—
I know it; I shudder at it; can you doubt
That Halbert loves you?
Helen. Do not think it, madam,
For mercy's sake, if you intend by love
Something beyond a brother's fondest care

For a lone sister! You are silent; turn
Your face away; your bosom throbs as grief
Or terror shook it. Am I grown a curse
To you—to him? O whither shall I fly?
Where seek for counsel? Dearest lady, save me!

[HELEN *throws herself on* LADY MACDONALD'S *neck.*

Lady M. Rest there, beloved fair one; I will try
To temper this to Halbert;—yet I fear—
He's bending towards us.

Helen. Hide me from his sight,
I cannot bear it now.

Lady M. [*leading* HELEN *to the side.*] That way; I'll break
This sorrow to him, if I can;—be calm. [*Exit* HELEN.

Enter HALBERT *from the opposite side.*

Hal. Was not that Helen? Wherefore should she fly
Upon my coming? But her absence serves
My purpose now. I came to talk of her,

Lady M. Of her? Sit down; you look fatigued and ill;
I'll fetch a draught of wine.

Hal. Fatigued and ill!
My looks belie me, then; I scarce have felt
So fresh in spirit since I was a boy,
And the sweet theme I come to speak of needs
No wine to make it joyous. It is marriage.

Lady M. My son!

Hal. Why, *you* look pale; I thought my wish
Was also yours. I know a common mother,
Who, having lost her husband in her prime,
Seeks from a grateful son some slight return
For love that watch'd his infancy, may feel
Her fortune cruel, when a new regard,
With all the greediness of passion, fills
The bosom where till then affection reign'd,
Which answer'd, though it could not rival, hers:
But we have lived so long as equal friends
With love absorbing duty, that I thought,
And I still think, increase of joy to me
Must bring delight to you. I could have lived

Content, as we have lived, and still prolong
The lingering ecstacy of fearless hope,
But that the licence of the time, which brings
A band of loose companions to our glen,
Requires that I should claim a husband's right
To shield its lovely orphan.
Lady M. You mean—Helen?
Hal. Whom else could I intend? If you have been
Perplex'd by fear that I might mean to seek
Another's hand, no wonder you grew pale.
But still you tremble;—what is this?
Lady M. My son,
Are you assured she loves you?
Hal. As assured
As of my love for her. In both, one wish,
As she has glided into womanhood,
Has grown with equal progress.
Lady M. Have you sought
Of her, if she esteems it thus?
Hal. By words?
No; for I never doubted it: as soon
Should I have ask'd you if a mother's love
Watch'd o'er my nature's frailties. If sweet hopes
Dawning at once on each; if gentle strifes
To be the yielder of each little joy
Which chance provided; if her looks upraised
In tearful thankfulness for each small boon
Which, nothing to the giver, seem'd excess
To her; if poverty endured for years
Together in this valley,—do not breathe
Of mutual love, I have no stronger proofs
To warrant my assurance. Mother, speak!
Do you know anything which shows all this
A baseless dream?
Lady M. My Halbert, you have quell'd
Fierce passion by strong virtue;—use your strength—
Nay, do not start thus; I do not affirm
With certainty you are deceived, but tremble
Lest the expressions of a thankful heart
And gracious disposition should assume

A colour they possess not, to an eye
Bent fondly over them.
Hal. It cannot be;
A thousand, and a thousand times, I've read
Her inmost soul: and you that rack me thus
With doubt have read it with me. Before Heaven,
I summon you to witness! In the gloom
Of winter's dismal evening, while I strove
To melt the icy burthen of the hours
By knightly stories, and rehearsed the fate
Of some high maiden's passion, self-sustain'd
Through years of solitary hope, or crown'd
In death with triumph, have you not observed,
As fading embers threw a sudden gleam
Upon her beauty, that its gaze was fix'd
On the rapt speaker, with a force that told
How she could lavish such a love on him?
Lady M. I have; and then I fancied that she loved you.
Hal. Fancied! Good mother, is that emptiest sound
The comfort that you offer? Is my heart
Fit sport for fancy? Fancied!—'twas as clear
As it were written in the book of Truth
By a celestial penman! Answer me,
Once more! when hurricanes have rock'd these walls,
And dash'd upon our wondering ears the roar
Of the far sea, exulting that its wastes
Were populous with death-pangs;—as my arms
Enfolding each, grew tighter with the sense
Of feebleness to save;—have you not known
Her looks, beyond the power of language, speak
In resolute content, how sweet it were
To die so link'd together?
Lady M. I have mark'd it.
Hal. Then wherefore do you torture me with doubt?
What can you know, what guess, that you can weigh
Against these proofs?
Lady M. Be firm; she loves another.
Hal. 'Tis false!—and yet, great Heaven! your qui-
Attest it. And you knew this? You partook [vering lips
Her counsels—His!—Yes, His!—you know the name

Which I must curse—of him I must pursue
Through deserts and through cities till I search
His bosom with my sword. Tell me the name—
Now—now—delay not.
Lady M. [*laying her hand on his arm*]. Halbert,
pause, and look
Into your mother's face, and then reply
To her;—does she deserve this of her son?
Hal. I am a wretch indeed to use command
Where I should humbly sue.—Sit, sit, dear mother,
Assume your old authority.
[*Wildly places her in a chair and falls on his knees beside it.*
I kneel
There—meekly as you taught me—when you raised
For the first time my little hands to God;
A child, obedient and infirm as then,
I do implore you, tell your wretched son
What he must suffer.
Lady. M. Are you arm'd to bear it?
Hal. For all things.
Lady M. Henry—
Hal. [*starting up.*] My own brother! Now
I see it clear; remember how she gazed
With fondness on him, when he came array'd
In a slave's tinsel; how she seized his hand
When I had dash'd the insulting weapon from it,
Aim'd at my life. Would I had slain him there!
Lady M. What fearful vision crosses you? Slay
Henry—
Him whom you moulded! From too thoughtless youth
Strike him to all that Death reveals, and bid
Your twice-stabb'd mother gaze upon her sons—
The murder'd and the guilty!
Hal. Guilty?—yes!
I am—I thought it—felt as if my arm
Could act it;—utter'd it. Look not upon me!
Earth hide me!—cover me!
[*Sinks into a seat and covers his face with his hands.*
Lady M. I fear'd this outbreak
Of fire subdued, not quench'd. My noble son,

As you have wrestled with the fiends, and quell'd them,
Be victor now!

Hal. [*rising.*] Are you assured she loves him?
It may be but a girlish dream,—her eye
Enchanted for a moment by the grace
Of youth—her fancy dazzled by the show
Of military prowess,—while her soul
In its serene and inmost temple waits
Untouch'd and true. 'Tis so.

Lady M. Would that it were!

Hal. I will awake her spirit from its trance;
I'll meet her face to face, and soul to soul,
And so be satisfied.

Lady M. You shall do so,
If you will rule your passion.

Hal. I am calm,
Docile as infancy; I'll seek her now.

Lady M. No;—I will bring her on the instant. Think
That she has not a refuge in the world
Except in our protecting care, and feel
How gently she should be entreated! Rage
From you would kill her.

Hal. Rage—to her? All weak
In passion as I am, you need not fear it.

Lady M. I'll trust you. [*Exit* LADY M.

Hal. [*alone.*] She will come with her sweet voice
To charm away this mist. Alas! I'm rude
And moody; he is gay, and quick of spirit,
And light of heart. Why did I let them roam
So often? Yet it cannot be; her heart
Could not be caught by gauds;—so pure; so arm'd—
So true!

Enter HENRY MACDONALD.

Henry. What, musing! Let me not disturb
Deep meditation. Is my mother near,
Or Helen?

Hal. Helen!

Henry. I have scarce a word
To spend with either; though I would not pass
Your tower unvisited, I'm bound to speed,

For I am bearer of an urgent letter
To Duncanson.
Hal. To Duncanson? The foe
Most bitter to our clan;—and you dare bring it
Here;—to your father's hall—where you were train'd
To clansman's duty;—which you left in scorn
And now revisit in a lackey's guise
To boast a cursed mission; yield it to me,
Traitor and slave! or I will tear it from you.
Henry. Stand off!—what frenzy rules you? Let me
Hal. There's treachery in it—and in you. [pass.

Enter LADY MACDONALD *and* HELEN.

Lady M. Your word!
[HALBERT, *at sight of* HELEN *pauses and shrinks back.*
Hal. [*To* HENRY.] Forgive me; I am ill at ease, and scarce
Know what I utter.
Henry. I shall think of this
But as brain-sickness which your studies bring;
Heaven keep me from them! I must not delay
A moment more:—farewell;—I shall return
This way to-morrow, and shall hope to find
Your grave philosopher in saner mood. [*Exit* HENRY.
Lady M. I leave you; recollect your word.
Hal. I will.
[*Exit* LADY M.
Hal. Be not alarm'd sweet Helen; if your looks,
Turn'd gently on me, had not power to still
The tempest my frail nature has endured,
The issue of this moment would command
All passion to deep silence, while I ask—
If my scathed life enrich'd by yours may spread
Its branches in the sunshine, or shrink up
In withering solitude, a sapless thing,
Till welcome death shall break it?
Helen. Do not think
Your noble nature can require a reed
So weak as mine to prop it: virtue's power
Which shields it as a breastplate, will not yield

To transient sorrow which a thankless girl
Can hurl against it.
Hal. Little do you guess
The heart you praise: 'tis true, among the rocks
I sought for constancy, and day by day
It grew; but then within its hardening frame
One exquisite affection took its root,
And strengthened in its marble;—if you tear
That living plant, with thousand fibres thence,
You break up all;—my struggles are in vain,
And I am ruin!
Helen. What a lot is mine!
I, who would rather perish than requite
Long years of kindness with one throb of pain,
Must make that soul a wreck!
Hal. No, Helen, no—
It is a dream; your heart is mine; mine only;—
I'll read it here:—you have not pledg'd its faith
To——any other?
Helen. No; not yet.
Hal. Thank God!—
Then you are mine; we have been betrothed for years.
Helen. Would it had been so!
Hal. You desire it?
Helen. Yes;
I then had kept such watch upon my soul,
As had not let the shadow of a fancy
Fall on your image there; but not a word
Of courtship pass'd between us.
Hal. Not a word,
Words are for lighter loves, that spread their films
Of glossy threads, which while the air's serene
Hang gracefully, and sparkle in the sun
Of fortune, or reflect the fainter beams
Which moonlight fancy sheds; but ours—yes, OURS!—
Was woven with the toughest yarn of life,
For it was blended with the noblest things
We lived for; with the majesties of old;
The sable train of mighty griefs o'erarched
By Time's deep shadows; with the fate of kings,—

A glorious dynasty—for ever crush'd
With the great sentiments which made them strong
In the affections of mankind; with grief
For rock-enthroned Scotland; with poor fortune
Shared cheerfully; with high resolves; with thoughts
Of death; and with the hopes that cannot die.
Helen. Hold! If you rend oblivion's slender veil
Thus fearfully, and spectres of the past
Glide o'er my startled spirit, it will fail
In reason.
Hal. No;—it shall cast off this cloud,
And retain no impression save of things
Which last for ever;—for to such our love
Has been allied. How often have we stood,
Clasp'd on yon terrace by columnar rocks,
Upon whose jagged orifice the sky
With its few stars seem'd pillar'd, and have felt
Our earthly fortunes, bounded like the gorge
That held us, had an avenue beyond,
Like that we gazed on; and when summer-eve
Has tempted us to wander on the bank
Of glory-tinged Loch-Leven, till the sea
Open'd beyond the mountains, and the thoughts
Of limitless expanse were render'd sweet
By crowding memories of delicious hours
Sooth'd by its murmur, we have own'd and bless'd
The Presence of Eternity and Home!
Helen. What shall I do?
Hal. Hear me while I invoke
The spirit of one moment to attest,
In the great eye of love-approving Heaven,
We are each other's. When a fragile bark
Convey'd our little household to partake
The blessing that yet lingers o'er the shrine
Of desolate Iona, the faint breath
Of evening wafted us through cluster'd piles
Of gently-moulded columns, which the sea—
Softening from tenderest green to foam more white
Than snow-wreaths on a marble ridge—illumed
As 't would dissolve and win them;—till a cave,

The glorious work of angel architects
Sent on commission to the sacred isle,
From which, as from a fountain, God's own light
Stream'd o'er dark Europe—in its fretted span
Embraced us.—Pedestals of glistening black
Rose, as if waiting for the airy tread
Of some enraptured seraph who might pause
To see blue Ocean through the sculptured ribs
Of the tall arch-way's curve, delight to lend
His vastness to the lovely. We were charm'd, (3)
Not awe-struck;—for the Beautiful was there
Triumphant in its palace. As we gazed
Rapt and enamour'd, our small vessel struck
The cavern's side, and by a shock which seem'd
The last that we should suffer, you were thrown
Upon my neck—You clasp'd me then;—and shared
One thought of love and heaven!

Helen. Am I indeed
Faithless, yet knew it not? my soul's perplex'd;—
Distracted. Whither shall it turn?—To you!—
Be *you* its arbiter. Of you I ask,
In your own clear simplicity of heart,
Did you believe me yours?

Hal. Yes; and you are:
With this sweet token I assure you mine,
[*Places a ring on her finger.*
In sight of angels. Bless you!

Helen. It is done.
I dare not, cannot, tear this ring away.

Hal. It but denotes what heaven has register'd;
We must not pause: when will you that this pledge
Shall be redeem'd? To-morrow?

Helen. Give me time
To speak with—to call in my scatter'd thoughts.

Hal. The next day, then?

Helen. Direct it as you please;
Would I were worthy!—pray you leave me now.

Hal. I go to share my blessedness with her
Whose love you share with me;—our mother, Helen.
[*Exit* HALBERT.

Helen. Where am I?—can I wake from this strange
dream? [*Observes the ring.*
No—'tis all real—the good and brave alone
Have power upon the spirits of the guiltless
To raise or mar them. O that I had met
All evil things—oppression—slander—hate—
How would I have defied them?

Enter LADY MACDONALD.

Lady M. Is it true
You have consented to wed Halbert?
Helen. Yes.
Lady M. My child, come to my heart. How 's this?
You are pale
And cold as marble.
Helen. You may well regard
My purpose with distrust;—but when I take
The noble Halbert's hand, I bid adieu
To every recollection which might touch
My duty to him. I shall never muse
On childhood's pleasures, innocent no more
For me;—shall never tread the shelter'd paths
Which I have lately linger'd in; nor think
Upon a soldier's glories; nor repeat
One name—O never!—I am very weak,
I did not know how weak. The Virgin aid me!
Lady M. She will, my lovely one.
Helen. I'll seek the chapel,
If these poor limbs will bear me.—On your bosom
I must seek strength first, mother.
Lady M. Weep there, child,
And may Heaven's arms encircle you as mine. [*Exeunt.*

ACT IV.

SCENE I.—*The Tower of Halbert.—Time—Noon of the Sixteenth Day.*

Enter HENRY MACDONALD.

Henry. Will no one answer me?—I call in vain;—
And must pass on without that glimpse of Helen
I came to win. [KENNETH *crosses the stage.*
Stay, fellow; where's my mother?

Ken. She is preparing for our master's wedding,
Of which our notice has been short; 'twas yesterday
Appointed for to-morrow.

Henry. Halbert's wedding!—
That's pleasant news, though strange;—to think my brother,
My solemn brother, all this time in love! [brother,
He has not trusted me: so I must ask
Of you, the fair one's name.

Ken. Name!—surely, sir,
It could be none but Helen Campbell.

Henry. Cease
Your jesting with that name, or with my sword
I'll try to teach you manners.

Ken. Jesting, sir!—
We have little jesting here;—although these walls
Will ring for once, when our dear master gives them
So kind a mistress.

Henry. Dare you mock me? No!—
I will not vent my rage on you;—if this
Is not a jest, tell your kind mistress,—here
Henry Macdonald waits her!—bid her come
And answer to him as she cares for life.

Ken. I'll seek her, sir,

Henry. Begone. [*Exit* KENNETH.
Can this be true?
Yes; that poor knave would never dare invent
A tale so monstrous;—but it passes all
My lightest comrades tell of woman's falsehood.
How will they scoff at me—duped and despised
By this meek mountain damsel—cast aside

For a dull dreamer of the rocks, who dared
To school me with his wisdom! Wise, indeed,
The lady has become, to leave my hopes
Of wealth and glory for these crazy walls,
And solemn disputations. 'Tis a jest,
I' faith a merry one!—her uncle, too,
My captain and my friend!—Most generous brother,
I 'll mar your triumph yet.

Enter HELEN.

O you are here!

Helen. Yes; on a summons couch'd in terms more
Than needful: I had come on lightest word [harsh
That spoke your wish to see me.

Henry. Do you talk
To me of harshness! Look me in the face—
Look steadily upon me, and reply
To one brief question.

[HENRY *seizes* HELEN'S *arm; she looks at him and turns away.*

Henry. No!—I need not ask it.
Yet hold one moment; is the bridegroom here?
I long to wish him joy.

Helen. Accuse him not:
He's innocent of all.

Henry. O, doubtless! Still
'T was churlish not to bid me to his bridal;
What is the happy hour?

Helen. Sunrise.

Henry. Until
That hour, farewell.

Helen. O leave me not in scorn!
But as you are a brave man, to the weak
Be merciful. Although no plighted faith
Is broken with you, I will not allow
A base self-flattery, to conceal the truth
That I have wrong'd you—stolen delightful hours,
And cherish'd gentle vanities, with heart
Too joyous to revert to holy ties
Long woven, though unrecognized, which link'd
My destiny to Halbert's. He has shown
That, *though I knew* it not, my life is his,

And I have own'd his title to the hand
This ring enriches.
Henry. And for dreams like this
You have repell'd a soldier's love, which you,
And only you, could have secured—released him
From the sole anchor of a giddy youth,
(So you described it,) and yourself from share
Of his young fortunes, and the ample dowry
With which your uncle would have graced them!
Helen. Stain not
The few sad moments we may spend with thought
So little worthy. Had my lot been cast
With yours, I should have cared for no success
Save as it made you happier; sought no pleasures
But the perennial gaiety your mirth
Had shed around me;—deem'd no travel long
If shared with—Hold!—Accept my last farewell;—
May that undaunted courage which breathes in you
Inspire you to attain the airiest heights
Of glory, and upon them carve a name
Resplendent to all soldiers;—let your frankness
Dispel all envy from it; may your feasts,
Crown'd with delights, be shared by noblest friends;
And from your towering fortunes, may the cloud
Which a slight woman's wayward folly wreathed
Around them, in soft sunshine melt at once,
And, with her, be forgotten! So Heaven speed you!
[*Exit* HELEN.
Henry. Yes; it will speed me; for she loves me still!
But I forget my duty;—this despatch
Is waited for by him who shall avenge me!
[*Exit* HENRY MACDONALD.

SCENE II.—*The Quarters of Glenlyon.*

GLENLYON—LINDSAY.

Glen. Surely 't is time Macdonald had return'd:
The readiest, boldest, and most constant officer
I ever yet promoted;—some mischance
Or treachery must delay him. Treachery—faugh!
'T is an ill word, but may import no more

Than a safe means of justice, which rash force
Might frustrate. Would our messenger were here!
Lind. Indeed time presses; we shall bear the charge
Of weakness for the doubt which has delay'd
The course prescribed.
Glen. He was not wont to loiter.
If the command be clear, my course is plain;
And yet—he comes—could I suspect he knew
The tidings that he bears, his face would tell them.

Enter HENRY MACDONALD.

Glen. How's this? your looks are wild; have you
Should shake a brave man's constancy? [met aught
Henry. I crave
Your pardon; 'tis a private grief unnerves me;
The lovely lady who has shared my walks,
And, as I proudly thought, return'd the love
She had inspired in me, at sunrise weds
My elder brother. What of that? My duty
Has been perform'd;—and Duncanson's reply
Is here. [HENRY *delivers a letter to* GLENLYON.
Glen. Thanks;—wait within;—refresh yourself;—
I'll deal with your fair rebel. [*Exit* HENRY MACDONALD.
My hand trembles
As it has never trembled;—I shall mar
The seal—open and read the letter.—
[LINDSAY *opens and reads the letter.*] Well?
Lind. It is as I expected and you fear'd;
The order is to guard the avenues (4)
To-night; and ere the morning, put in force
The royal ordinance on the lives of all
Below the age of seventy.
Glen. Would that death
Had met me first!
Lind. Yet you will not withhold
Obedience?
Glen. Never;—I am shaken now,
But you shall find me constant to obey
The simple law of duty: none shall live.
Lind. Think of these clansmen as of rebels armed

In treason, whom a law, disdaining forms,
Has sentenced: it is hard to make brave soldiers
Anticipate the headsman with their swords;
Yet we must do our office.
Glen. Be it yours
To show the men their duty.
Lind. I will do
All you may order but I cannot range
The soldiers so as to prevent escape
Through the wild passes of these mountains; none,
Unless familiar with the glen, can do this.
Glen. Call in Macdonald. [*Exit* LINDSAY.
He shall plant the men:
His present passion moulds him to our will.

Re-enter LINDSAY *and* HENRY MACDONALD.

Glen. [*To* HENRY.] There is a service I would claim
Which, well achieved, shall humble to your feet [of you,
The rival who presumes to cross your wish
For my alliance, and reward your love
With happiest fortune.
Henry. Let the service be
So full of peril that the chance of life
Bears but a thousandth portion of the hope
That death is greedy with, and I embrace it.
Glen. It lacks the peril you desire. This clan,
Though crouching now to William's power retains
Its lion fierceness. We must tame its chiefs
By forcing them, in abject terms, to sue
For pardon—yield their hidden stores of arms—
And feel themselves subdued. At dawn to-morrow
We 'll awe them to submission, by array
Of soldiers, planted in each track, whose arms
Shall make the glen their prison. What I seek
Is, that at midnight, you, who know the paths,
Would so dispose the soldiers, that no clansman
Escape the vale—save by the eastern road,
Which Duncanson will line;—that done, repose—
And dream that at the sunrise you shall see
Your daring rival suppliant, and my niece
Your wealthy bride. Will you do this?

Henry. I will.

Enter DRUMMOND.

Drum. I come to ask if I shall bid the band
Attend you at the feast.
Glen. What feast
Lind. The banquet
Mac Ian gives to-day:—the hour is near.
Glen. A banquet! that is terrible.
Lind. [*Apart to* GLENLYON.] Be wary;
Eyes are upon us.
[*Aloud.*] You will send the band;
All we can do should grace our visit.
Glen. [*To* DRUMMOND.] Yes:
You may retire. [*Exit* DRUMMOND.
[*To* HENRY.] At dawn I will attend
Your bridal; 'twill be *yours*. At this night's feast
Beware that by no word or look you hint
The midnight duty or the morning's hope:
Be calm—as I am. [*Exeunt* GLENLYON *and* LINDSAY.
Henry. [*Alone.*] How shall I subdue
The mantling sense of victory which laughs
And dances in my spirit? He who dash'd
My good sword from my grasp shall feel he stands
Before his master; chidden as I was,
And, for a moment, silenced, I shall rain
Pardon and life on him who would have stolen
The mistress of my soul! She's mine! She's mine!
[*Exit.*

SCENE III.—*Terrace before Halbert's Tower.*

Enter LADY MACDONALD *and* HALBERT

Hal. Is she so pensive still!
Lady M. Alas! in vain
I watch to see some gleam of pleasure light
Her mournful eyes. Save that her fingers ply
The needle constantly, as if they wrought
From habit of sweet motion, you might doubt
If in her statue-like and silent beauty
The life of this world stirr'd.
Hal. If Henry broke

Upon her suddenly, his harsh demeanour
Might drive the colour from her cheeks, and scare
Her thoughts from their repose.

Lady M. I cannot hope it.
She has been more serene since then. Before,
She would pursue her work with restless hand;
Leave it and pace the room; sit down and sigh,
As if her heart were breaking; wring her hands;
And then—as finding strength to chase some image
That madden'd her away,—toss back her head,
And smiling, urge her needle with more speed
Than at the first. But since she spoke with Henry
She has been calm, though sad, as one beyond
The reach of fear or hope; who saw her course
And was resign'd to follow it.

Hal. Resign'd!
Is that my sum of happiness? To hold
As in a tyrant's grasp, a lovely form
Subdued by its own gentleness, yet know
That the celestial mind defines the power
Of finest bonds,—and from the winning smile
In which fond custom wreathes the face, escapes
To scenes long past, or for a distant voice
Waits listening! I have held the gaoler's lot
Far heavier than his captive's; yet how light
His chains to those I must inflict and bear!

Lady M. You wrong my lovely daughter;—when she weds.
Each wish, each hope, each fancy which might dim
The brightness of her constancy, will fly
For ever. Her affections have been toss'd
But not perverted; as the water keeps
Its crystal beauty in its bed of rock,
Though vex'd by winds which from a cloudless sky
Sweep o'er high mountain tarns, her soul perplex'd
By contrary emotions, caught no taint,
Sunk or uplifted, but will settle, bright
As not a breath had wreath'd it. She will prove
With all her soul a true wife to you, Halbert,
Though not a blithe one.

Hal. Do you not believe
She will be happy soon?
Lady M. She will be tranquil;
But if you ask me if she will enjoy
The happiness for which her nature 's framed,
I cannot veil my fears.
Hal. What should I do?
I have known fearful heart-struggles; but this
Makes all seem nothing.
Lady M. There is in your soul
A noble purpose.
Hal. Must I give up all,
And yet live on? No human hope remains
For me if this be blasted. With the fall
Of the great objects which my youth revered,
I lost all power to mingle in the strifes
Of this new-modell'd world. I cannot taste
The sweet resources Heaven, in grace, provides
The love-lorn manhood; thirst of fame in me
Is quench'd; society's miscall'd delights
Would fret me into madness; and bright war,
The glorious refuge of despair, would seem
A slaughterous and a mercenary trade
To one who has no country. If I act
The thought which fills your bosom, I must live
Loveless and hopeless. Can you ask it, mother?
Lady M. I cannot ask it. But I saw in you
High resolution gathering, while I spoke
Of Helen's present state, and what I fear
'T will be when—
Hal. [*stopping her.*] Speak no more. It shall not [be;
I will make ready for the sacrifice.
Lady M. My noble son! Let me embrace you, proud
As never Roman mother in the arms
Of her crown'd hero. Shall I speak to Helen?
Hal. No—not for worlds—I cannot utter yet
The irrevocable word. It may be still
That you misjudge her;—or that she mistakes
Her heart's *true* feeling. I will wait the morn-

Enter ALASTER MACDONALD.

Alas. My father sends me with a gracious message
Which I rejoice to bear, though it confess
A fault in him; he offers you his hand,
With frank confession he has done you wrong,
And claims your presence at the feast he gives
To-day to Argyle's officers.

Hal. Dear cousin,
I am most happy in Mac Ian's love,
And will with earnest duty answer it;
But I entreat him to excuse me now,
For I am busy with sick thoughts; unfit
For high festivity.

Alas. I know you hate,
As I do, this submission; but 'tis done;
No courtesies can make it deeper. Hark!
[*Distant music heard.*
The guests assemble now.

Hal. That music breathes
As when I heard it first;—in lively strain
It vibrates on the ear, but on my soul
Falls like a dirge. Some awful doom awaits
Our race, and thus through sounds of this world speaks
To the mind's ear. I will avert or share it.
Yes;—I attend you. Mother, you will watch
Your precious charge as if on every glance
A life depended? I am sure you will.
[*Exit* LADY MACDONALD.
Now, Alaster, I am ready for your feast.
[*Exeunt* HALBERT *and* ALASTER.

SCENE IV.—*A Hall in Mac Ian's House.—A Banquet.*

MAC IAN, ANGUS, DONALD, JOHN MACDONALD, GLENLYON, LINDSAY, HENRY MACDONALD, Officers *of Argyle's Regiment, and* Clansmen, *seated.*

Mac I. (*rising*). Once more I thank you for the grace you pay
To a fallen chief, whose name and title live
As shadows of the past; but who can taste
A comfort in his downfall, while brave men

Show, by their courteous action, they preserve
Respect for what he has been. Let us drink
A health to those you serve;—the Majesties
Of England; whom to death I had withstood,
Had hope for James's cause remain'd; but whom,
That hope extinguish'd, I will frankly serve.
Rise, clansmen! Drink to William and his Queen,
To whom we owe our duty.

Glen. We esteem
The pledge at its just value.

Mac I. I perceive
Your thoughts still wrong me. Stoutly have I fought (5)
Upon King James's side; but with Dundee
His cause expired. I felt it when he fell,
Lifting his arm to wave these clansmen on,
To make his triumph sure. The menial slave,
The household traitor, who, with felon hand,
Stole then his noble life, destroy'd, in him,
A line of monarchs. While the tangled woods
Of Killikrankie rang with shrill delight
Of our victorious Highlanders, I knew
That we were conquer'd; and I sheath'd my sword
For ever.

Angus. [*Apart to* DONALD.] Do you mark him!

Donald. Yes; his life
Casts out its dying flash. He's doom'd.

Glen. You wrong
Your gallant comrades; surely loss of one
Might be supplied.

Mac I. Not of a man like him.
'T is not in multitudes of common minds
That by contagious impulses are sway'd,
Like rushes in the wind, a mighty cause
Can live; but in the master mind of one
Who sways them. Sooner would these glorious hills
If crush'd to powder, with their atoms guard
Our glens, than million clansmen fill the place
Of such a chief. Would I had died with him!
No *more of this*; fill me some wine. [*Drinks.*

Enter ALASTER *and* HALBERT.

Your leave
One moment.

[MAC IAN *comes to* HALBERT, *and takes his hand.*

Mac I. Halbert, I lack words to thank
This kindness as I ought.

Hal. It is deep joy
For me to know I am at peace with all,
And, most of all, with you.

Mac I. 'T is very strange:
I am amazed how I could doubt your faith;
A film is passing from my soul, that leaves
All clear within its vision. Take your place.

[HALBERT *and* ALASTER *sit on the opposite side of the hall to* GLENLYON *and* LINDSAY.

Mac I. [*resuming his seat.*] Your pardon. Let us drain another cup
To our chief guest, Glenlyon; frank in war,
And generous in alliance.

Hal. [*To* ALASTER.] Watch him now;
He changes; see—his very lips are pale;—
I will unmask him.

Alas. Pray, forbear.

Glen. Accept
A soldier's thanks.

Hal. [*To* ALASTER.] His voice is choked—look now—
Do you not see him shiver?

Alas. It is but fancy;
How can he hope to see us fall more low
Than he has sunk us?

Mac I. [*To* GLENLYON.] You must pledge me now;—
Wine to Glenlyon.

[GLENLYON *rises—takes the cup—puts it to his lips—and hastily returns it.*

Hal. He does not taste the wine,
He dares not taste it. Hold me not.

[*Breaking from* ALASTER.

Glenlyon!
Why did you put aside the untasted cup?
Why did you change and glare? Why is your heart—

Your hollow heart—shivering and shrinking now?
Look on him, friends! Mac Ian!—Angus!—Donald!
John!—Alaster! Does some infernal charm
Delude you, that you rise not?
[*To* GLENLYON.] Answer me!
What fiendish thought was yours when you withdrew
That goblet from your lips?
Lind. Who 's this that dares
Insult Glenlyon?
Hal. Parasite, I speak not
To such as you! Behold him now! He's silent.
Lind. In scorn.
[*To* GLENLYON.] You will not deign to make reply
To this coarse brawler? Let us hence.
Glen. [*addressing* MAC IAN]. Farewell!
You cannot curb the rudeness of your followers,
Nor I endure it. [GLENLYON *and* LINDSAY *retiring.*
Hal. Let them not depart;
Not for myself I speak,—for I shall find
No time so fit to die; but for your wives—
Your sires—your babes—your all. Glenlyon! turn,
If you have so much nature as to look
The thing you dare.
Glen. (*turning.*) Be brief in your demand.
What is your pleasure?
Hal. That you spend three minutes
With me in the cold moonlight;—arm'd;—alone.
Glen. With you—a conquer'd rebel?
Mac I. (*holding* HALBERT). He's a guest
Beneath this roof's protection.
Hal. Let him claim
Its shelter if he dare, and I will kneel
And he shall trample on me.
Lind. [*To* GLENLYON]. Come away!
Alas. Dear Halbert, do not risk a life so dear
As yours is to my father.
Hal. Risk my life—
Dost see him? There is that within his breast
Would paralyse his arm, and make his knees
Tremble, and bid the stubborn soldier fall

Half slain without the steel;— [*To* GLENLYON.
I charge on you
Black treason—what I know not yet—but feel;
Will you confess, or meet me?
Lind. Do not answer.
Glen. I meet you!—Talk to me of treason!—me
Who bear the lawful orders of a king;
To whom you are a traitor;—whom your race,
With all the hatred of their savage thoughts,
Abjure;—but he shall curb them—they shall feel
His power is here. Your worthless life, rash fool,
To-night I spare;—but if again we meet,
It shall be as you wish, for death. [*Exeunt* GLENLYON, &c.
Hal. It shall.
Mac I. [*To* HALBERT]. I thank your generous courage,
With wonder on your passion. [but I look
Hal. What! does nothing
Whisper of peril to you?
Mac I. No—my heart
Is jocund;—stripp'd of glory, power, and name,
We shall be all united and at peace.
Hal. Heaven grant it!
Alas. I would rather die to-morrow,
If I might choose, than hold the sweetest home
At England's mercy.
Hal. My brave cousin! Blessings
In life and death be with you.
Mac I. Come away;
This sadness will infect us. There's my hand
And my heart with it.
Alas. And mine too.
John. And mine.
Mac I. Farewell;—no strife shall separate us more.
[*Exeunt* MAC IAN, ALASTER *and* JOHN.
Hal. That's well!— [*Sees* HENRY.
My brother here?—he wakes my soul
To its own sufferings. Yet we must not part thus.
Brother!
Henry. What would you with me?
Hal. I would know

We part to-night as brothers should; you think
That you have cause to blame me: wait awhile,
And you may judge me better.
Henry. Blame you?—No—
Not I—except that you forgot to bid
Your brother to your bridal. He'll make bold
To go unbidden.
Hal. Fail not;—you may find
A blessing there you will be grateful for.
Henry. (*Aside*). Can he suspect my purpose?—O, no
You have deserved all gratitude;—and there [doubt
Will crown your favours.
Hal. I *will* take your hand;
It trembles.
Henry. No;—or if it shakes,—the night
Chills bitterly. It will be firm to-morrow.
[*Exit* HENRY MACDONALD.
Hal. To-morrow!—that will settle all—I'll seek
My mother now;—if she is still assured
That Helen loves—I cannot bear the thought—
Silence and darkness teach me to endure it!
[*Exit* HALBERT MACDONALD.

ACT V.

SCENE I.—*A chapel adjoining Halbert's Tower, partly in ruins, in which is seen the Tomb of Halbert's Father.—Morning just breaking.*

Enter HALBERT MACDONALD.

Hal. The hour approaches when my life's last hope
Will be extinguish'd;—it is quivering now
Upon the verge of darkness;—yet I feel
No pang—no throb. My spirit is serene,
As if prepared to cleave celestial air
To passionless delights—this calm within me
Has something awful.

Enter LADY MACDONALD.

Hal. Mother, wish me joy.

Lady M. Joy, Halbert?—
Hal. Yes;—of victory achieved
O'er the last passion which can ever rack
My bosom. I can bear to ask you now,
If any change in Helen raises doubt
How she will answer, when—I am not quite arm'd
As I have boasted.
Lady M. No;—she scarcely raised
Her head, until her work—a bridal robe—
Hung dazzling on her arm; as then she sought
Her chamber, I impress'd one solemn kiss
Upon her icy brow: then as aroused
From stupor by poor sympathy, she threw
Her arms around my neck; and whispering low,
But piercingly, conjured me to keep watch
Upon her thinkings, lest one erring wish
Should rise to mar her duty to her lord.
Hal. I ask no more, till in this holy place
Her soul shall answer mine; too well I know
The issue; yet I shrink not, nor repine.
Lady M. Your calmness frightens me; you think of
Hal. But as a thing to sigh for, not to seek; [death.
I never will forsake you for the grave,
Till heaven dismiss me thither. Has she slept?
Lady M. I know not; but her chamber has been still
Until, on notice of the priest arrived,
She sent to pray the guidance of his arm
To lead her to this place.
Hal. The priest arrived!
O what a world of happiness these words
Should indicate. It opens now to show
Its glories melting into air. They come—
Her step is heavy; may the heart that sways it
Go lighter hence!

Enter the Priest, *leading* HELEN, *in bridal attire.*

Hal. (*meeting them*). Before a solemn change
Shall pass on our condition, let me claim
One kiss, in memory of the wintry paths
Which we have walked with purity of heart

And heaven-ward aspect;—should death take us now,
It had no terrors. [*Kisses* HELEN'S *forehead.*
Priest. Sir, your words are sad
For such an hour. Shall we begin the service?
Hal. We wait my brother's presence.
Helen. O, not his!
I am quite ready; let the rite proceed.

Enter HENRY MACDONALD.

Hal. You are most welcome;—we have waited for you.
Henry. (*looking eagerly round.*). Your pardon; all
are not assembled yet
Where is Glenlyon?
Hal. Who?
Henry. The lady's uncle
He has, no doubt, approved her choice, and means
To grace the ceremonial. You will wait
His coming?
Hal. He resign'd this lovely one
To those who knew her worth; he shall not now
Infest the roof that shelters her.
Henry. [*aside.*] All lost!
What can detain him?
Priest. Shall the rite proceed?
Hal. I have a few momentous words to speak
Before the rites begin;—to you, fair Helen,
I must address them; but I pray my brother,
Whom they touch nearly, to attend.
Henry. I listen.
Hal. How, through sad years, the consecrated joy
Which seems to wait me at this hour, has dawn'd
And brighten'd, from its first uncertain rays
Along the rugged pathway of a life
Else unadorn'd, my passion-fever'd speech
Has shown;—nor less divine the vision glows
Now it stands clear before me, and invites
To mingle heaven with earth. You cannot doubt it.
Helen. Never;—I only wish I could deserve
A love like yours.
Hal. Yet ere I grasp this dream,
And make its phantoms real;—within these walls

By both revered;—where side by side we knelt
In infantine humility, and faith
No question ruffled; where your spirit sought
To cast from its pure mirror, each faint cloud
Which jocund thoughts might breathe, or nicest fear
Imagine to o'erspread it;—at the tomb
Of him who watches o'er his trembling son,
At this dread crisis of his fate;—I ask you—
Explore your heart; and if you find a wish
That glances at another fortune, speak it!

Helen. Have mercy on me!

Hal. You have seen me chafed
By passion worse than aimless in a soul
Whose destinies are fashion'd by a Power
Wise, bountiful, resistless;—and the words
Such frenzy dashes with its foam might seem
To urge that one unlike myself must prove
Unfit for your affection. Hear me now,
When calmer reason governs me! There stands
One near to me in blood; a soldier, valiant,
And raised above all baseness; in the bloom
And gladness of his youth; who loves you—not
Perchance as I do—but who loves you well;—
You are a soldier's child;—your noble heart
May from most natural impulse turn to one
Endow'd and graced as he is;—if I read
Your wish aright;—I'll join this hand with his,—
As freely as I would relinquish life
To succour yours.

Helen. [*sinking on her knee before* HALBERT]. Heaven

Hal. [*raising* HELEN]. 'Tis enough; [bless you!
Now let me draw this ring away—'tis done—
You'll let me wear it for a little time—
A very little time? Come, Henry,—take
This hand, with the deep blessing of a man
Whose all is given with it.

[*Takes* HENRY'S *hand to join it to* HELEN'S. HENRY *stands abstracted.*

Hal. You are cold—

Your thoughts are far away;—a blackness spreads
Across your face; speak to us!
Helen. He is stricken
With wonder at your goodness. Henry; Love!
Join me to bless your brother.
Henry. Will no bolt
From heaven fall on this head!
Helen. His senses wander,
Scared at this sudden happiness;—anon
All will be well. [*Grasps his arm.*
Henry. O never!—do not gaze
Upon me;—Helen, touch me not;—fly all.
Hal. Wherefore? From whom?
Henry. O God! I cannot tell it.
[*A confused cry heard far in the Valley below.*
Hal. What cry is that!
Lady M. The shrieks of death arise.
Henry. Not death!

Enter ANGUS.

Angus. Fly for your lives; our cherish'd guests
Have fall'n upon the clansmen wrapp'd in sleep
With murderous swords; and burning hovels light
Their slaughterous way.
Henry. 'Tis false.
Angus. False! Hark! Behold!
[*Another cry heard more distinctly from the Valley, and the glare of distant fire seen.*
Henry. O misery! I meant not this.
Hal. You!

Enter ALASTER MACDONALD, *wounded.*

Alas. Cousin—
Halbert—I've struggled through the ranks of death
Dying to cry for justice. A few moments—
And my poor life expended, you will bear
The Chieftain's sword.
Hal. Where is your Father?
Alas. Slain.
Hal. And John?
Alas. Both murder'd in their sleep. I cry

Enter ALASTER *and* HALBERT.

Your leave
One moment.

[MAC IAN *comes to* HALBERT, *and takes his hand.*

Mac I. Halbert, I lack words to thank
This kindness as I ought.

Hal. It is deep joy
For me to know I am at peace with all,
And, most of all, with you.

Mac I. 'T is very strange:
I am amazed how I could doubt your faith;
A film is passing from my soul, that leaves
All clear within its vision. Take your place.

[HALBERT *and* ALASTER *sit on the opposite side of the hall to* GLENLYON *and* LINDSAY.

Mac I. [*resuming his seat.*] Your pardon. Let us drain another cup
To our chief guest, Glenlyon; frank in war,
And generous in alliance.

Hal. [*To* ALASTER.] Watch him now;
He changes; see—his very lips are pale;—
I will unmask him.

Alas. Pray, forbear.

Glen. Accept
A soldier's thanks.

Hal. [*To* ALASTER.] His voice is choked—look now—
Do you not see him shiver?

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How can he hope to see us fall more low
Than he has sunk us?

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Wine to Glenlyon.

[GLENLYON *rises—takes the cup—puts it to his lips—and hastily returns it.*

Hal. He does not taste the wine,
He dares not taste it. Hold me not.

[*Breaking from* ALASTER.

Glenlyon!
Why did you put aside the untasted cup?
Why did you change and glare? Why is your heart—

[*As he raises his arms in supplication, a shot strikes him; he falls.*

That is well.
Mercy, Most Merciful!—I am absolved.

Enter GLENLYON.

Glen. Am I too late? My niece——
Helen. Away! away!
Henry. [*rushing on* GLENLYON.] Die, murderer!
Lady M. [*stops his arm.*] Let him live. Glenlyon,
I pray you may have life stretch'd out beyond
The common span of mortals, to endure
The curse of Glencoe cleaving to your soul.
Helen. Amen!
Glen. It is upon me, yet I will preserve you.
Hal. Leave us to die.

Enter DRUMMOND.

Drum. I seek Glenlyon here.
The eastern pass is open; Duncanson
Has not arrived: that way the clansmen fly.
Glen. Heaven speed them! [*Exit* GLENLYON.
Henry. Then will I oppose this breast
To the pursuing demons, till I win
The death I thirst for. [*Exit* HENRY.
Helen. Henry! [*Sinks on the ground.*
Hal. There is comfort;
Raise me to clasp my mother. You will pray
For Henry;—and will find a child in her
Whom mercy spares this moment [*To the* Priest.
To your charge
I leave the gathering of my scanty fortune,
Which will provide a refuge for these sad ones
In some small convent, where they'll weep out life.
Will you do this?
Priest. I will.
Hal. Bless you! I mark
The face which gazed in pity on my rage
Beside my father's death-bed:—'tis subdued—
Hush'd—conquer'd—pardon'd—and I die in peace.
[Dies.

Enter ALASTER *and* HALBERT.

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One moment.

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This kindness as I ought.

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Hal. [*To* ALASTER.] His voice is choked—look now—
Do you not see him shiver?

Alas. It is but fancy;
How can he hope to see us fall more low
Than he has sunk us?

Mac I. [*To* GLENLYON.] You must pledge me now;—
Wine to Glenlyon.

[GLENLYON *rises—takes the cup—puts it to his lips—and hastily returns it.*

Hal. He does not taste the wine,
He dares not taste it. Hold me not.

[*Breaking from* ALASTER.

Glenlyon!
Why did you put aside the untasted cup?
Why did you change and glare? Why is your heart—

Your hollow heart—shivering and shrinking now?
Look on him, friends! Mac Ian!—Angus!—Donald!
John!—Alaster! Does some infernal charm
Delude you, that you rise not?
[*To* GLENLYON.] Answer me!
What fiendish thought was yours when you withdrew
That goblet from your lips?
Lind. Who's this that dares
Insult Glenlyon?
Hal. Parasite, I speak not
To such as you! Behold him now! He's silent.
Lind. In scorn.
[*To* GLENLYON.] You will not deign to make reply
To this coarse brawler? Let us hence.
Glen. [*addressing* MAC IAN]. Farewell!
You cannot curb the rudeness of your followers,
Nor I endure it. [GLENLYON *and* LINDSAY *retiring.*
Hal. Let them not depart;
Not for myself I speak,—for I shall find
No time so fit to die; but for your wives—
Your sires—your babes—your all. Glenlyon! turn,
If you have so much nature as to look
The thing you dare.
Glen. (*turning.*) Be brief in your demand.
What is your pleasure?
Hal. That you spend three minutes
With me in the cold moonlight;—arm'd;—alone.
Glen. With you—a conquer'd rebel?
Mac I. (*holding* HALBERT). He's a guest
Beneath this roof's protection.
Hal. Let him claim
Its shelter if he dare, and I will kneel
And he shall trample on me.
Lind. [*To* GLENLYON]. Come away!
Alas. Dear Halbert, do not risk a life so dear
As yours is to my father.
Hal. Risk my life—
Dost see him? There is that within his breast
Would paralyse his arm, and make his knees
Tremble, and bid the stubborn soldier fall

Half slain without the steel;— [*To* GLENLYON.
I charge on you
Black treason—what I know not yet—but feel;
Will you confess, or meet me?
Lind. Do not answer.
Glen. I meet you!—Talk to me of treason!—me
Who bear the lawful orders of a king;
To whom you are a traitor;—whom your race,
With all the hatred of their savage thoughts,
Abjure;—but he shall curb them—they shall feel
His power is here. Your worthless life, rash fool,
To-night I spare;—but if again we meet,
It shall be as you wish, for death. [*Exeunt* GLENLYON, &c.
Hal. It shall.
Mac I. [*To* HALBERT]. I thank your generous courage,
With wonder on your passion. [but I look
Hal. What! does nothing
Whisper of peril to you?
Mac I. No—my heart
Is jocund;—stripp'd of glory, power, and name,
We shall be all united and at peace.
Hal. Heaven grant it!
Alas. I would rather die to-morrow,
If I might choose, than hold the sweetest home
At England's mercy.
Hal. My brave cousin! Blessings
In life and death be with you.
Mac I. Come away;
This sadness will infect us. There's my hand
And my heart with it.
Alas. And mine too.
John. And mine.
Mac I. Farewell;—no strife shall separate us more.
[*Exeunt* MAC IAN, ALASTER *and* JOHN.
Hal. That's well!— [*Sees* HENRY.
My brother here?—he wakes my soul
To its own sufferings. Yet we must not part thus.
Brother!
Henry. What would you with me?
Hal. I would know

We part to-night as brothers should; you think
That you have cause to blame me: wait awhile,
And you may judge me better.
Henry. Blame you?—No—
Not I—except that you forgot to bid
Your brother to your bridal. He'll make bold
To go unbidden.
Hal. Fail not;—you may find
A blessing there you will be grateful for.
Henry. (*Aside*). Can he suspect my purpose?—O, no
You have deserved all gratitude;—and there [doubt
Will crown your favours.
Hal. I *will* take your hand;
It trembles.
Henry. No;—or if it shakes,—the night
Chills bitterly. It will be firm to-morrow.
[*Exit* HENRY MACDONALD.
Hal. To-morrow!—that will settle all—I'll seek
My mother now;—if she is still assured
That Helen loves—I cannot bear the thought—
Silence and darkness teach me to endure it!
[*Exit* HALBERT MACDONALD.

ACT V.

SCENE I.—*A chapel adjoining Halbert's Tower, partly in ruins, in which is seen the Tomb of Halbert's Father.—Morning just breaking.*

Enter HALBERT MACDONALD.

Hal. The hour approaches when my life's last hope
Will be extinguish'd;—it is quivering now
Upon the verge of darkness;—yet I feel
No pang—no throb. My spirit is serene,
As if prepared to cleave celestial air
To passionless delights—this calm within me
Has something awful.

Enter LADY MACDONALD.

Hal. Mother, wish me joy.

Lady M. Joy, Halbert?—
Hal. Yes;—of victory achieved
O'er the last passion which can ever rack
My bosom. I can bear to ask you now,
If any change in Helen raises doubt
How she will answer, when—I am not quite arm'd
As I have boasted.
Lady M. No;—she scarcely raised
Her head, until her work—a bridal robe—
Hung dazzling on her arm; as then she sought
Her chamber, I impress'd one solemn kiss
Upon her icy brow: then as aroused
From stupor by poor sympathy, she threw
Her arms around my neck; and whispering low,
But piercingly, conjured me to keep watch
Upon her thinkings, lest one erring wish
Should rise to mar her duty to her lord.
Hal. I ask no more, till in this holy place
Her soul shall answer mine; too well I know
The issue; yet I shrink not, nor repine.
Lady M. Your calmness frightens me; you think of
Hal. But as a thing to sigh for, not to seek; [death.
I never will forsake you for the grave,
Till heaven dismiss me thither. Has she slept?
Lady M. I know not; but her chamber has been still
Until, on notice of the priest arrived,
She sent to pray the guidance of his arm
To lead her to this place.
Hal. The priest arrived!
O what a world of happiness these words
Should indicate. It opens now to show
Its glories melting into air. They come—
Her step is heavy; may the heart that sways it
Go lighter hence!

Enter the Priest, *leading* HELEN, *in bridal attire.*

Hal. (*meeting them*). Before a solemn change
Shall pass on our condition, let me claim
One kiss, in memory of the wintry paths
Which we have walked with purity of heart

And heaven-ward aspect;—should death take us now,
It had no terrors. [*Kisses* HELEN'S *forehead.*
Priest. Sir, your words are sad
For such an hour. Shall we begin the service?
Hal. We wait my brother's presence.
Helen. O, not his!
I am quite ready; let the rite proceed.
Enter HENRY MACDONALD.
Hal. You are most welcome;—we have waited for you.
Henry. (*looking eagerly round.*). Your pardon; all
are not assembled yet
Where is Glenlyon?
Hal. Who?
Henry. The lady's uncle
He has, no doubt, approved her choice, and means
To grace the ceremonial. You will wait
His coming?
Hal. He resign'd this lovely one
To those who knew her worth; he shall not now
Infest the roof that shelters her.
Henry. [*aside.*] All lost!
What can detain him?
Priest. Shall the rite proceed?
Hal. I have a few momentous words to speak
Before the rites begin;—to you, fair Helen,
I must address them; but I pray my brother,
Whom they touch nearly, to attend.
Henry. I listen.
Hal. How, through sad years, the consecrated joy
Which seems to wait me at this hour, has dawn'd
And brighten'd, from its first uncertain rays
Along the rugged pathway of a life
Else unadorn'd, my passion-fever'd speech
Has shown;—nor less divine the vision glows
Now it stands clear before me, and invites
To mingle heaven with earth. You cannot doubt it.
Helen. Never;—I only wish I could deserve
A love like yours.
Hal. Yet ere I grasp this dream,
And make its phantoms real;—within these walls

By both revered;—where side by side we knelt
In infantine humility, and faith
No question ruffled; where your spirit sought
To cast from its pure mirror, each faint cloud
Which jocund thoughts might breathe, or nicest fear
Imagine to o'erspread it;—at the tomb
Of him who watches o'er his trembling son,
At this dread crisis of his fate;—I ask you—
Explore your heart; and if you find a wish
That glances at another fortune, speak it!

Helen. Have mercy on me!

Hal. You have seen me chafed
By passion worse than aimless in a soul
Whose destinies are fashion'd by a Power
Wise, bountiful, resistless;—and the words
Such frenzy dashes with its foam might seem
To urge that one unlike myself must prove
Unfit for your affection. Hear me now,
When calmer reason governs me! There stands
One near to me in blood; a soldier, valiant,
And raised above all baseness; in the bloom
And gladness of his youth; who loves you—not
Perchance as I do—but who loves you well;—
You are a soldier's child;—your noble heart
May from most natural impulse turn to one
Endow'd and graced as he is;—if I read
Your wish aright;—I'll join this hand with his,—
As freely as I would relinquish life
To succour yours.

Helen. [*sinking on her knee before* HALBERT]. Heaven

Hal. [*raising* HELEN]. 'Tis enough; [bless you!
Now let me draw this ring away—'tis done—
You'll let me wear it for a little time—
A very little time? Come, Henry,—take
This hand, with the deep blessing of a man
Whose all is given with it.

[*Takes* HENRY'S *hand to join it to* HELEN'S. HENRY *stands abstracted.*

Hal. You are cold—

Your thoughts are far away;—a blackness spreads
Across your face; speak to us!
Helen. He is stricken
With wonder at your goodness. Henry; Love!
Join me to bless your brother.
Henry. Will no bolt
From heaven fall on this head!
Helen. His senses wander,
Scared at this sudden happiness;—anon
All will be well. [*Grasps his arm.*
Henry. O never!—do not gaze
Upon me;—Helen, touch me not;—fly all.
Hal. Wherefore? From whom?
Henry. O God! I cannot tell it.
[*A confused cry heard far in the Valley below.*
Hal. What cry is that!
Lady M. The shrieks of death arise.
Henry. Not death!

Enter ANGUS.

Angus. Fly for your lives; our cherish'd guests
Have fall'n upon the clansmen wrapp'd in sleep
With murderous swords; and burning hovels light
Their slaughterous way.
Henry. 'Tis false.
Angus. False! Hark! Behold!
[*Another cry heard more distinctly from the Valley, and the glare of distant fire seen.*
Henry. O misery! I meant not this.
Hal. You!

Enter ALASTER MACDONALD, *wounded.*

Alas. Cousin—
Halbert—I've struggled through the ranks of death
Dying to cry for justice. A few moments—
And my poor life expended, you will bear
The Chieftain's sword.
Hal. Where is your Father?
Alas. Slain.
Hal. And John?
Alas. Both murder'd in their sleep. I cry

For justice on the head of him who ranged
The assassins! Hear me! I would kneel indeed,
But my joints stiffen.
Hal. Where's the traitor?
Alas. [*looking round, sees* HENRY *and exclaims.*] There!
[*Falls lifeless into the arms of the* Priest, *who bears him out.*
Hal. My most unhappy brother!
Priest. [*returning.*] He has pass'd.
Hal. And I am chief! This is the fatal hour
That Moina saw.
[ANGUS *and* Attendants *kneel to* HALBERT.
Ancestral shades, I see
You beckon in yon flame. Let me sit here;
The grave will serve. Where does the doom'd man stand?
Henry. Here! Chief of the Macdonalds, let my blood
Atone my crime—it was not this—I meant
But your disgrace. How little did I know
The heart I meant to grieve! Strike! vindicate
The ancient power, which perishes while thus
I pray to be its victim. Do you hear?
[*Renewed cries from the Valley.*
Release me from those cries; give me one look
Of love, and end me.
Hal. Will none plead for him?
Helen. It was for me [*To* LADY MACDONALD.
Plead for your son.
Lady M. I plead
For him who, plotting infamy, has brought
Death on our race! All things around me plead
Against him; and that wail is fraught with shrieks
Of mothers, who, with death's convulsions, strive
In vain to shield their infants—such as he
Was once—as innocent, as blithe, as fair.
O Henry! Henry! could I die for you!
[LADY MACDONALD *falls on his neck. Another cry heard. She starts away.* HELEN *sinks on her knees beside the tomb.*
Henry. I'm ready,
Hal. There!—without.
Henry. I'll wait you there.
Hal. Will Heaven vouchsafe no refuge?

[*As he raises his arms in supplication, a shot strikes him; he falls.*

That is well.
Mercy, Most Merciful!—I am absolved.

Enter GLENLYON.

Glen. Am I too late? My niece——
Helen. Away! away!
Henry. [*rushing on* GLENLYON.] Die, murderer!
Lady M. [*stops his arm.*] Let him live. Glenlyon,
I pray you may have life stretch'd out beyond
The common span of mortals, to endure
The curse of Glencoe cleaving to your soul.
Helen. Amen!
Glen. It is upon me, yet I will preserve you.
Hal. Leave us to die.

Enter DRUMMOND.

Drum. I seek Glenlyon here.
The eastern pass is open; Duncanson
Has not arrived: that way the clansmen fly.
Glen. Heaven speed them! [*Exit* GLENLYON.
Henry. Then will I oppose this breast
To the pursuing demons, till I win
The death I thirst for. [*Exit* HENRY.
Helen. Henry! [*Sinks on the ground.*
Hal. There is comfort;
Raise me to clasp my mother. You will pray
For Henry;—and will find a child in her
Whom mercy spares this moment [*To the* Priest.
To your charge
I leave the gathering of my scanty fortune,
Which will provide a refuge for these sad ones
In some small convent, where they'll weep out life.
Will you do this?
Priest. I will.
Hal. Bless you! I mark
The face which gazed in pity on my rage
Beside my father's death-bed:—'tis subdued—
Hush'd—conquer'd—pardon'd—and I die in peace.
[Dies.

SONNETS.

I.

EVENING SERVICE.

PERFORMED BY DR. VALPY AT READING SCHOOL.

THERE is a holy magic in that tone
Can wake from Memory's selectest cell
The hour when first upon my heart it fell [flown
Like dew from Heaven:—the years that since have
Seem airy dreams;—yet not of self alone
Those sacred strains are eloquent;—they tell
Of numbers temper'd by their simple spell
In boyhood's unreflecting prime to own
Their kindred with their fellows—best of lore!—
Who to this spot, as Persians to the East,
Turn reverential thoughts from every shore
Which holds them; nor forbear till life hath ceased
With child-like love a blessing to implore
On thee, mild Charity's unspotted Priest!

II.

THE FORBURY, AT READING.

VISITED ON A MISTY EVENING IN AUTUMN.

Soft uplands, that in boyhood's earliest days
Seem'd mountain-like and distant, fain once more
Would I behold you! but the autumn hoar
Hath veil'd your pensive groves in evening haze;
Yet must I wait till on my searching gaze
Your outline lives—more dear than if ye wore
An April sunset's consecrating rays—
For, even thus the images of yore
Which ye awaken glide from misty years
Dream-like and solemn, and but half unfold
Their tale of glorious hopes, religious fears,
And visionary schemes of giant mould;
Whose dimmest trace the world-worn heart reveres,
And, with love's grasping weakness, strives to hold.

III.

ON HEARING THE SHOUTS OF THE PEOPLE AT THE READING ELECTION IN THE SUMMER 1826, AT A DISTANCE.

HARK! from the distant town the long acclaim
On the charm'd silence of the evening breaks
With startling interruption;—yet it wakes
Thought of that voice of never-dying fame
Which on my boyish meditation came
Here, at an hour like this;—my soul partakes
A moment's gloom, that yon fierce contest slakes
Its thirst of high emprise and glorious aim:
Yet wherefore? Feelings that from Heaven are shed
Into these tenements of flesh, ally
Themselves to earthly passions, lest, unfed
By warmth of human sympathies, they die;
And shall—earth's fondest aspirations dead—
Fulfil their first and noblest prophecy.

IV.

VIEW OF THE VALLEY OF READING.

FROM TILEHURST, AT THE CLOSE OF THE SAME ELECTION.

Too long have I regarded thee, fair vale,
But as a scene of struggle which denies
All pensive joy; and now with childhood's eyes
In old tranquillity, I bid thee hail;
And welcome to my soul thy own sweet gale,
Which wakes from loveliest woods the melodies
Of long-lost fancy—Never may there fail
Within thy circlet, spirits born to rise
In honour—whether won by Freedom rude
In her old Spartan majesty, or wrought
With partial, yet no base regard, to brood
O'er usages by time with sweetness fraught;
Be thou their glory-tinted solitude,
The cradle and the home of generous thought!

V.

TO THE THAMES AT WESTMINSTER,

IN RECOLLECTION OF THE BANKS OF THE SAME RIVER AT CAVERSHAM, NEAR READING.

With no cold admiration do I gaze
Upon thy pomp of waters, matchless stream!
But home-sick fancy kindles with the beam
That on thy lucid bosom faintly plays;
And glides delighted through thy crystal ways,
Till on her eye those wave-fed poplars gleam,
Beneath whose shade her first ethereal dame
She fashion'd; where she traced in clearest dream
Thy mirror'd course of wood-enshrined repose
Besprent with island haunts of spirits bright;
And widening on—till, at the vision's close,
Great London, only then a name of might
For childish thought to build on, proudly rose
A rock-throned city clad in heavenly light.

VI.

TO THE SAME RIVER.

I MAY not emulate their lofty aim,
Who, in divine imagination, bold,
With mighty hills and streams communion hold,
As living friends; and scarce I dare to claim
Acquaintance with thee in thy scenes of fame,
Wealthiest of Rivers! though in days of old
I loved thee where thy waters sylvan roll'd,
And in some sense would deem thee yet the same.
So love perversely cleaves to some old mate
Estranged by fortune; in his very pride
Seems lifted; waxes in his greatness great;
And silent hails the lot it prophesied,—
Content to think in manhood's palmy state
Some lingering traces of the child abide.

VII.

TO MR. MACREADY,

ON HIS PERFORMANCE OF WERNER, IN LORD BYRON'S TRAGEDY OF THAT NAME.

O LEARNED in Affection's thousand ways!
I thought thy art had proved its happiest power,
When thou didst bend above the opening flower
Of sweet Virginia's beauty, and with praise
Measured in words but fineless in the gaze
Of the proud sire, her gentle secret won:
Or when the Patriot Archer's hardy Son
Was school'd by doting sternness for the hour
Of glorious peril; but the just designs
Were ready; now thy soul's affections glow
By thy own genius train'd, through frigid lines,
And make a scorner's bloodless fancy show,
When love disdain'd round its cold idol twines,
How mighty are its weakness and its woe!

VIII.

FAME—THE SYMBOL AND PROOF OF IMMORTALITY.

The names that slow Oblivion have defied,
And passionate Ambition's wildest shocks
Stand in lone grandeur, like eternal rocks,
To cast broad shadows o'er the silent tide
Of time's unebbing flood, whose waters glide,
To ponderous darkness from their secret spring,
And, bearing on each transitory thing,
Leave those old monuments in loneliest pride.
There stand they—fortresses uprear'd by man,
Whose earthly frame is mortal; symbols high
Of power unchanging,—thought that cannot die;
Proofs that our nature is not of a span,
But of immortal essence, and allied
To life and joy and love unperishing.

IX.

TO MR. MACREADY,

ON THE BIRTH OF HIS FIRST CHILD;
IN RECOLLECTION OF HIS PERFORMANCE OF VIRGINIUS.

THERE is no father, who, with swimming eyes,
Has seen thee present life and passion lend
To scenes by simple-hearted Poet penn'd,
Depicting household love in Roman guise,
Which, breathed through ancient forms, in freshness vies
With love of yesterday, who does not send
A greeting to thee as a cherish'd friend.
Now thy own heart acknowledges the ties
Which skill, forestalling Nature, made thee guess
With finest apprehension, and commend
To tearful crowds;—yet while the sweet excess
Of joy that thou hast passion'd forth, shall fill
Thy soul with all it dream'd of happiness,
May Fear and Grief remain Art's Fictions still!

X.

TO CHARLES DICKENS.

ON HIS "OLIVER TWIST."

Not only with the Author's happiest praise
Thy work should be rewarded; 't is akin
To DEEDS of men, who, scorning ease to win
A blessing for the wretched, pierce the maze
Which heedless ages spread around the ways
Where fruitful Sorrow tracks its parent Sin;
Content to listen to the wildest din
Of passion, and on fellest shapes to gaze,
So they may earn the power which intercedes
With the bright world and melts it; for within
Wan Childhood's squalid haunts, where basest needs
Make tyranny more bitter, at thy call
An angel face with patient sweetness pleads
For infant suffering to the heart of all.

XI.

TO MISS ADELAIDE KEMBLE.

ON HER APPROACHING RETIREMENT FROM THE STAGE.
[DECEMBER, 1842.]

If Time has doom'd the triumphs of thy race
With loss of thee—the youngest and the last—
To take majestic station in the Past,
We thank thee that thy fleeting hours embrace
Some hint of all their glories;—bid us trace
In thy proud action the unconquer'd will
Of the great Roman; own once more a thrill
Akin to that which blanch'd the childish face
At Siddons' whisper; bless the honest grace
Which the true heart of chivalry should still
Shed o'er thy Father's brow;—consol'd that all
Thus waning into memory, grow more sweet,
And make their last expression musical,
To live while any heart they hush shall beat.

XII.

ON THE RECEPTION OF THE POET WORDSWORTH AT OXFORD.

O NEVER did a mighty truth prevail
With such felicities of place and time,
As in those shouts sent forth with joy sublime
From the full heart of England's Youth, to hail
Her once neglected bard, within the pale
Of Learning's fairest Citadel! That voice
In which the future thunders bids rejoice
Some who through wintry fortunes did not fail
To bless with love as deep as life, the name
Thus welcomed;—who, in happy silence, share
The triumph; while their fondest musings claim
Unhoped-for echoes in the joyous air,
That to their long-loved Poet's spirit bear
A Nation's promise of undying fame.

XIII.

THE MEMORY OF THE POETS.

The fame of those pure bards whose fancies lie
Like glorious clouds in summer's calmest even,
Fringing the western skirts of darkening Heaven,
And sprinkled o'er with hues of rainbow dye,
Awakes no voice of thunder, which may vie
With mighty chiefs' renown;—from ages gone,
In low undying strain, it lengthens on,
Earth's greenest solitudes with joy to fill,—
Felt breathing in the silence of the sky,
Or trembling in the gush of new-born rill,
Or whispering o'er the lake's undimpled breast;
Yet blest to live when trumpet notes are still,
To wake a pulse of earth-born extasy
In the deep bosom of eternal rest.

XIV.

ETON COLLEGE.

SURVEYED AFTER LEAVING A SON AT SCHOOL FOR THE FIRST TIME.

How often have I fixed a stranger's gaze,
On yon fam'd turrets, clad in light as fair
As this sweet evening lends, and felt the air
Of Learning that from calm of ancient days
Breathes round them ever! Now to me they wear
Hues drawn from dearer thought; the radiant haze
That mantles them grows thick with fondest care,
And its slant sunbeams flicker like the praise
Youth wins from wisdom;—for in yon retreats
One little student's heart expectant beats
With blood of mine;—O God! vouchsafe him power,
When I am dust, to stand on this sweet place,
And, through the vista of long years, embrace
With cloudless soul this first Etonian hour!

LINES

WRITTEN AT THE NEEDLES HOTEL, ALUM BAY, ISLE OF WIGHT, AFTER A WEEK SPENT AT THAT PLACE.

How simple in their grandeur are the forms
That constitute this picture! Nature grants
Scarce more than sternest cynic might desire—
Earth, Sea, and Sky, and hardly lends to each
Variety of colour; yet the soul
Asks nothing fairer than the scene it grasps
And makes its own for ever! From the gate
Of this home-featur'd Inn, which nestling cleaves
To its own shelf among the downs, begirt
With trees which lift no branches to defy
The fury of the storm, but crouch in love
Round the low snow-white walls whence they receive
More shelter than they lend,—the heart-sooth'd guest
Views a furze-dotted common, on each side
Wreath'd into waving eminences, cloth'd
Above the furze with scanty green, in front
Indented sharply to admit the sea,
Spread thence in softest blue—to which a gorge
Sinking within the valley's deepening green
Invites by grassy path; the Eastern down
Swelling with pride into the waters, shows

Its sward-tipp'd precipice of radiant white,
And claims the dazzling peak beneath its brow
Part of its ancient bulk, which hints the strength
Of those fam'd pinnacles that still withstand
The conquering waves, as fortresses maintain'd
By death-devoted troops, hold out awhile
After the game of war is lost, to prove
The virtue of the conquer'd.—Here are scarce
Four colours for the painter; yet the charm
Which permanence, mid worldly change, confers
Is felt, if ever, here; for he who loves
To bid this scene refresh his inward eye
When far away, may feel it keeping still
The very aspect that it wore for him,
Scarce chang'd by Time or Season: Autumn finds
Scant boughs on which the lustre of decay
May tremble fondly; Storms may rage in vain
Above the clumps of sturdy furze, which stand
The Forest of the Fairies; Twilight grey
Finds in the landscape's stern and simple forms
Nought to conceal; the Moon, although she cast
Upon the element she sways a track
Like that which slanted through young Jacob's sleep
From Heaven to earth, and flutter'd at the soul
Of Shadow's mighty Painter, who thence drew
Hints of a glory beyond shape, reveals
The clear-cut framework of the sea and downs
Shelving to gloom, as unperplex'd with threads
Of pallid light, as when the summer's noon
Bathes them in sunshine; and the giant cliffs

Scarce veiling more their lines of flint that run
Like veins of moveless blue through their bleak sides,
In moonlight than in day, shall tower as now,
(Save when some moss's slender stain shall break
Into the samphire's yellow in mid air,
To tempt some trembling life) until the eyes
Which gaze in childhood on them shall be dim.
Yet deem not that these sober forms are all
That Nature here provides, although she frames
These in one lasting picture for the heart.
Within the foldings of the coast she breathes
Hues of fantastic beauty. Thread the gorge,
And, turning on the beach, while the low sea
Spread out in mirror'd gentleness, allows
A path along the curving edge, behold
Such dazzling glory of prismatic tints
Flung o'er the lofty crescent, as assures
The orient gardens where Aladdin pluck'd
Jewels for fruit no fable,—as if earth,
Provok'd to emulate the rainbow's gauds
In lasting mould, had snatch'd its floating hues
And fix'd them here; for never o'er the bay
Flew a celestial arch of brighter grace
Than the gay coast exhibits; here the cliff
Flaunts in a brighter yellow than the stream
Of Tiber wafted; then with softer shades
Declines to pearly white, which blushes soon
With pink as delicate as Autumn's rose
Wears on its scattering leaves; anon the shore
Recedes into a fane-like dell, where stain'd

With black, as if with sable tapestry hung,
Light pinnacles rise taper; further yet
Swells out in solemn mass a dusky veil
Of purple crimson,—while bright streaks of red
Start out in gleam-like tint, to tell of veins
Which the slow-winning sea, in distant times,
Shall bare to unborn gazers.

If this scene
Grow too fantastic for thy pensive thought,
Climb either swelling down, and gaze with joy
On the blue ocean, pour'd around the heights,
As it embraced the wonders of that shield
Which the vow'd Friend of slain Patroclus wore,
To grace his fated valour; nor disdain
The quiet of the vale, though not endow'd
With such luxurious beauty as the coast
Of Undercliff embosoms;—mid those lines
Of scanty foliage, thoughtful lanes and paths,
And cottage roofs, find shelter; the blue stream,
That with its brief vein almost threads the isle,
Flows blest with two grey towers, beneath whose shs
The village life sleeps trustfully,—whose rites
Touch the old weather-harden'd fisher's heart
With child-like softness, and shall teach the boy
Who kneels, a sturdy grandson, at his side,
When his frail boat amidst the breakers pants,
To cast the anchor of a Christian hope
In an unrippled haven. Then rejoice,
That in remotest point of this sweet isle,
Which with fond mimicry combines each shape

e Great Land that, by the ancient bond
)arted once, and sea-united now),
her in unity—a Spirit breathes
iff, and tower, and valley, by the side
)ttage-fire, and the low grass-grown grave,
ome on English earth, and Home in Heaven!

VERSES

TO THE MEMORY OF A CHILD NAMED AFTER CHARLES LAMB, WHO DIED AT BRIGHTON, 30TH DECEMBER, 1835, AGED SIX YEARS.*

Our gentle Charles has pass'd away
From Earth's short bondage free,
And left to us its leaden day
And mist-enshrouded sea.

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* The child who bore the name of Charles Lamb, and shared largely in his affections, survived him just a year—Lamb's death having taken place on the 27th December, 1834. He had been taken to Brighton in the hope of restoration from mild sea air, and at first seemed revived by its influence; but severe weather set in, our hopes withered, and he sunk, leaving us the consolation of a most beautiful image in his death—a lighting-up and ennobling the face at the last, which I cannot consent to refer to mere physical causes. The thoughts expressed in these verses—if they deserve the name—were suggested at the time when we lost him; but I could not then find the heart to attempt putting them into rhyme, notwithstanding the opinion of the nurse who watched his patient decay, "That Master Charles ought to have verses written upon him;" and have only just accomplished her wish. From a similar feeling I abstained from publishing among Lamb's letters the following little note, on his being informed of the use I had made of his name; but I have a pleasure (scarcely melancholy) in adding it now.

"Dear T—

"You could not have told me of a more friendly thing than you have been doing. I am proud of my namesake. I shall take care never to do any dirty action, pick pockets, or anyhow get myself hang'd, for fear of reflecting ignominy upon your young Crisom. I have now a motive to be good. I shall not omnis moriar, my name borne down the black gulf of oblivion. I shall survive in eleven letters—five more than Cæsar. Possibly I shall come to be knighted, or more—

Sir C. L. Talfourd, Bt.

Yet hath it an authoriat's twang with it, which will wear out with my name for poetry. Give him a smile from me till I see him. If you do not drop down be-

Here, by the restless ocean's side,
Sweet hours of hope have flown,
When first the triumph of its tide
Seem'd omen of our own.

That eager joy the sea-breeze gave,
When first it raised his hair,
Sunk with each day's retiring wave,
Beyond the reach of prayer.

The sun-blink that through drizzling mist,
To flickering hope akin,
Far waves with feeble fondness kiss'd,
No smile as faint can win;

Yet not in vain with radiance weak
The heavenly stranger gleams—
Not of the world it lights to speak,
But that from whence it streams.

That world our patient sufferer sought,
Serene with pitying eyes,
As if his mounting Spirit caught
The wisdom of the skies.

---

fore, some day in the week after next I will come and take one night's lodging with you, if convenient, before you go hence. You shall name it. We are in town, tamen speciali gratiâ, but by no arrangement can get near you. Believe us both, with the greatest regards, yours and Mrs. Talfourd's.

"CHARLES LAMB—PHILO-TALFOURD.

"I come as near it as I can."

With boundless love it look'd abroad
For one bright moment given,
Shone with a loveliness that aw'd,
And quiver'd into Heaven.

A year made slow by care and toil
Has pac'd its weary round,
Since Death's enrich'd with kindred spoil
The snow-clad, frost-ribb'd ground.

Then LAMB, with whose endearing name
Our boy we proudly grac'd,
Shrank from the warmth of sweeter fame
Than ever Bard embrac'd.

Still 't was a mournful joy to think
Our darling might supply,
For years on earth, a living link
To name that cannot die.

And though such fancy gleam no more
On earthly sorrow's night,
Truth's noble torch unveils the shore
Which lends to both its light.

The nurseling there that hand may take
None ever grasp'd in vain,
And smiles of well-known sweetness wake
Without their tinge of pain.

Though 'twixt the Child and childlike Bard
Late seem'd distinction wide,
They now may trace, in Heaven's regard,
How near they were allied.

Within the infant's ample brow
Blythe fancies lay unfurl'd,
Which all uncrush'd may open now
To charm a sinless world.

Though the soft spirit of those eyes
Might ne'er with Lamb's compete—
Ne'er sparkle with a wit as wise,
Or melt in tears, as sweet.

That calm and unforgotten look
A kindred love reveals,
With his who never friend forsook,
Or hurt a thing that feels.

In thought profound, in wildest glee,
In sorrow's lengthening range,
His guileless soul of infancy
Endur'd no spot or change.

From traits of each our love receives
For comfort nobler scope;
While light which childlike genius leaves
Confirms the infant's hope:

And in that hope with sweetness fraught
Be aching hearts beguil'd,
To blend in one delightful thought
The Poet and the Child.

APPENDIX.

NOTE TO THE ATHENIAN CAPTIVE.—Page 160.

On the final exit of ISMENE, the original play thus proceeded to its close.

Iph. Since no opposing voice of oracle
Confutes her sentence, it must be fulfilled.
Advance, and bind the victim.
Tho. Hold, for mercy!
A moment! Gods, who hover o'er our council,
Ye cannot look upon this and be silent!
Corinthians, ye have known him from a child;
Behold him now. Upon his forehead Heaven
Hath set a living seal of innocence,
Which should outspeak a thousand vices—feign'd
It may be—while the unspotted soul, that speaks
In nature's honest signs, shall find an answer
In every honest heart? Ye are silent. Then
I turn to ye, Athenians. Countrymen!
Whom I have led to conquest—*Masters here,*
Draw your keen swords, and teach the conquered justice.
[Athenians *advance.*
Iph. Forbear!
Tho. Deliver, then, your prisoner, my charge:
Let me confer with him apart from all.
I'll answer for his life's blood with mine own.
Iph. Corinthians! we will give the Athenian way;
He speaks with power that is not of the earth.
Fate struggles into light—let us retire.
[*Exeunt all but* HYLLUS *and* THOAS.
Hyl. Thoas, thou wilt not let Creusa think
Her brother guilty?
Tho. Would that for myself
I might implore like grace! but that I fear
Thou canst not grant. I have another suit
For that which thou canst give.
Hyl. What boon can I,
In these my numbered minutes, grant to thee?
What canst thou ask? Forgetfulness? Alas
I have no power.
Tho. Yes; in the boon I ask
That blessing is included. 'T is a thing
Which I must shortly taste, a thing I thirst for;

But it will have no sweetness and no worth,
Unless it come from thee.
Hyl. What is it?
Tho. Death.
Hyl. I know that one of us must die. The lot
Hath fallen on me; and it is best. My life
Is that of a slight stripling; thine is rich
In promises of greatness.
Tho. No; most worthless—
For it is tainted. Had my soul been base
From nature, I might win a conqueror's wreath
Still in the field; but noble as it was,
It shivers at the shadow of its crime,
And shuts itself from this world;—in another
He plucks the knife from his bosom.
It may expand unsoil'd. Behold this steel,
Which thy brave kindness left me; it is red
From the paternal fountain whence thou drew
The blood that circles in thy veins; receive it,
And sheath it here! [*kneels* The gods require a life
For his, and mine alone can justly pay
The forfeit.
Hyl. Mine will satisfy.
Tho. No, Hyllus;
So paid, 'twill bring upon thy native Corinth
A double curse. For there is none so deadly
As that of guiltless blood, poured out by men
In the high name of justice. Think, O think,
What torture will be mine, when pestilence
Lays waste thy city; when Creusa wails
For her slain brother, and the burning truth
Lives ever in my vision: O, be just!
Be merciful, and send the dagger home!
Hyl. I may not stain Jove's temple with thy blood.
Tho. [*rising*] Thou art right; thou art right. There is a fitter spot.
Walk with me to the grove, in whose recess
Thy father's ashes are inurn'd; where still
His shade is waiting unavenged, and calls
His son to his last duty.
Hyl. I will go.
Tho. 'Tis well. Now may I grasp thy hand again
And taste thy generous friendship; for I feel
The stain of blood already passing from me,
As though the sacrifice were past. May'st thou
And she, whom thou wilt cherish with such love
As brothers rarely feel, live happy.
Hyl. Never! [*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.—*The outside of the Funereal Grove.*

Enter two Corinthian Soldiers.

1*st Cor. Sol.* Comrade, hast thou heard tidings from the temple?

2nd Cor. Sol. None since the crowd withdrew from it and left
The prince and the Athenian leader there;
But these may tell us more.

Enter two Athenian Soldiers.

1st Cor. Sol. Can you inform us
How the strange conference, between our prince
And him who led you, ended?

1st Ath. Sol. They have left
The fane together, and have bent their way
To the thick grove which holds the urn of Creon;
Take heed no evil happen to our chief,
Or we will make a wilderness of Corinth.

1st Cor. Sol. This is the grove. They must have enter'd it
On the west side. Ye need not fear—the prince
Was without arms, and Thoas, in the might
Of corporal strength, o'ermatches him. Hast heard
Aught of the queen?

2nd Cor. Sol. Here comes the priest.—Dost know

Enter IPHITUS.

Whither the queen hath wandered?

Iph. From the fane
Where she in madness had denounc'd a youth
Whom I believe most innocent, she pac'd
The city, with a step so firm and brow
So resolute, that none dar'd stay her course
By deed or question. To the mournful glen,
Which, if hush'd rumours are believ'd, she lov'd
Strangely to linger in, she bent her way!
Its depth was clear,—the poisonous vapour slept
Within its frightful home. From a tall crag,
Whence none could stop her, I beheld her pass
To the detested cavern; at its entrance
She paused an instant, cast a mournful look
Upon the sun just setting; toss'd her arms
Wildly towards heaven, then drew them to her breast,
In act as if she press'd an infant there;
And, as her eye, uplifted, caught a glimpse
Of those who might prevent her, backward drew
Into the cave, whose deadly vapours wreathed
Her form grown spectral. So she faded hence,
Where none dare ever tread to seek for that
Which was Ismene!

Enter CREUSA.

Cre. Where is Hyllus! where's
The Athenian chief? I hear they left the fane
Together—they are gone to mortal conflict,—
I'm sure on't.—Iphitus, thou art Jove's priest;
Haste with me, and prevent them! [*A groan from the wood.*
Heard ye that?

It is too late for succour. I will go,
Though sights of horror blast me!
Iph. Lady, thou
Wilt be distracted.
Cre. No; there is no refuge
In madness for a wretchedness like mine!
Away! away! Hold back, I pass alone.
Iph. Let's follow. [*Exeunt.*

SCENE III.—*The interior of the Funereal Grove.*

The Urn of CREON. *The Knife bloody on its Pedestal. On one side* THOAS *wounded; on the other,* HYLLUS, *with face averted, and covered with his hands.*

Tho. I bless thee! do not mourn; it was well done—
Speak kindly of me as thou canst, to her—
Thy sister.

Enter PENTHEUS *and* Athenian Soldiers.

Pen. Have I come too late?
Tho. No, Pentheus,
In happy time.
Pen. Alas! but to avenge thee.
Tho. Friend, there is nothing to avenge; this death
Was yielded to my prayer. Thou may'st guess well
Why I have courted it. My brief command
Will now devolve on thee; but I would make
A treaty with this youth, whom I now hail
As King of Corinth. 'Twill be short, but sealed
With blood:—that the Athenian troops retire,
Laden with the rich spoils they have achiev'd,
And leave his reign in peace. Wilt thou consent? [To HYLLUS.
Hyl. Alas! I must.
Tho. And, Pentheus, thou wilt see
Our part fulfilled?
Pen. Thy wish shall be obeyed.

Enter CREUSA, *followed by* IPHITUS, and others.

Cre. Ha! Thoas wounded! first and only love!
O, cruel, cruel brother! never more
Be called by that dear title.
Tho. Hold, Creusa,
I will not purchase a last ecstasy
By such disunion. Hear me! and Corinthians,
Attend! My death is just. 'Tis I who slew
Your king!—with what excuse of circumstance
You will hereafter gather from the prince,
Whose noble tongue will speak too gently of me.
Pentheus, thy hand; convey these poor remains
To that fair city I have lov'd so well;
Her glories dawn upon me now, more clear
Than I have ever seen them in the dreams
Which have enrich'd my little life! O, Athens! [*Dies.*

Hyl. Sister!
Cre Forgive me, brother.
[She falls on his breast, and bursts into tears.
Hyl. Weep there; 'tis thy home.
Fate, which has stricken us so young, and made
Our regal state so dismal, leaves this joy—
That we shall cleave together to the grave.

NOTES TO GLENCOE.

NOTE 1. Page 195.

"*Frank disdain*
Of dull existence, which had faintly gleam'd
Like yonder Serpent river, through dark rocks
Which bury it."

The Serpent River is a rapid mountain stream on the north side of Loch Leven, which after a fall of about twenty feet, rushes through a series of overhanging rocks, like natural arches, through which the rapid water below can be scarcely discerned.

NOTE 2. Page 196.

"*No broad lake*
Studded with island woods, which make the soul
Effeminate with richness, like the scenes
In which the baffled Campbells hid their shame,
And scorn'd their distant foes."

These lines refer to the charge which the enemies of the Campbells used to urge against them, that when beaten from the borders of Loch Finne, they found shelter on the shores and in the islands of Loch Awe and defied their foes to follow them, by the proverb, "It is a far cry to Loch Awe." Perhaps Loch Awe embraces or borders on the most lovely scenery in the Highlands, and Glencoe is embedded in that which is the most sublime.

Note 3. Page 213.

"*We were charm'd,*
Not awe-struck;—for The Beautiful was there
Triumphant in its palace."

In seeking to embody in this passage the author's impression of the Cave of Fingal, in Staffa, he is aware that it differs from that which all the descriptions he has read of the same scene convey. All suggest far greater dimensions—a hollow far more vast and awful, but less exquisite in beauty, than to his eye the reality justifies. "Compared to this (it has been said) what are the cathedrals or the palaces built by men?—mere models or playthings;—imitative or diminutive as his works will always be when compared with those of nature." According to the author's recollection, the cave would be more fitly compared to a narrow aisle of a great cathedral, fashioned with nicest art, and embellished with the most florid sculpture, than represented as something immeasurably greater than the cathedral itself; and the actual admeasurement of the cave will rather accord with this impression, than with that which is more popular The height of the top of the arch above the water at mean tide is sixty-six feet; the breadth at the entrance forty-two feet: whence it contracts during its length two hun-

dred and twenty-seven feet, until at the extremity it is only twenty-two feet in width; and the roof descends in nearly the same proportion. When it is further recollected that even this width is narrowed to the eye by the row of exquisite columns which continue on the northern side, and along which the adventurer may step, and that a slight bend about half way breaks its uniformity, perhaps he will be pardoned for thinking that there has been much exaggeration in attributing the grandeur which arises from space and gloom to this wonderful cavern. On the other hand, justice has not been done—indeed, never can be done by words—to the fairy loveliness of the scene,—the delicate colour of the water,—the grace of the columns,—the elegance of the arched roof, and the blue serenity of the distant sea, as seen from beneath it.

Note 4. Page 217.

"The order is to guard the avenues
To-night; and ere the morning, put in force
The Royal ordinance on the lives of all
Below the age of seventy."

Sir Walter Scott's narrative of the massacre:—

Mac Ian of Glencoe (this was the patronymic title of the chief of this clan) was a man of a stately and venerable person and aspect. He possessed both courage and sagacity, and was accustomed to be listened to by the neighbouring chieftains, and to take a lead in their deliberations. Mac Ian had been deeply engaged both in the campaign of Killiecrankie, and in that which followed under General Buchan; and when the insurgent Highland chiefs held a meeting with the Earl of Breadalbane, at a place called Auchallader, in the month of July, 1691, for the purpose of arranging an armistice, Mac Ian was present with the rest, and, it is said, taxed Breadalbane with the design of retaining a part of the money lodged in his hands for the pacification of the Highlands. The Earl retorted with vehemence, and charged Mac Ian with a theft of cattle, committed upon some of his lands by a party from Glencoe. Other causes of offence took place, in which old feuds were called to recollection; and Mac Ian was repeatedly heard to say, he dreaded mischief from no man so much as from the Earl of Breadalbane. Yet this unhappy chief was rash enough to stand out to the last moment, and declined to take advantage of King William's indemnity, till the time appointed by the proclamation was well nigh expired.

The displeasure of the Earl of Breadalbane seems speedily to have communicated itself to the Master of Stair, who, in his correspondence with Lieutenant Colonel Hamilton, then commanding in the Highlands, expresses the greatest resentment against Mac Ian of Glencoe, for having, by his interference, marred the bargain between Breadalbane and the Highland chiefs. Accordingly, in a letter of 3d December, the Secretary intimated that Government was determined to destroy utterly some of the clans, in order to terrify the others, and he hoped that, by standing out and refusing to submit under the indemnity, the Mac Donalds of Glencoe would fall into the net,—which meant that they would afford a pretext for their extirpation. This letter is dated a month before the time limited by the indemnity; so long did these bloody thoughts occupy the mind of this unprincipled statesman.

Ere the term of mercy expired, however, Mac Ian's own apprehensions, or the advice of friends, dictated to him the necessity of submitting to the same conditions which others had embraced, and he went with his principal followers to take the oath of allegiance to King William. This was a very brief space before the 1st of January, when, by the terms of the proclamation, the opportunity of claiming the indemnity was to expire. Mac Ian was, therefore, much alarmed to find that Colonel Hill, the governor of Fort William, to whom he tendered his oath of allegiance, had no power to receive it, being a military, and not a civil officer. Colonel Hill, however, sympathised with the distress and even tears of the old chieftain, and gave him a letter to Sir Colin Campbell of Ardkinlas, Sheriff of Argyleshire, requesting him to receive the "lost sheep," and administer the oath to him, that he might have the advantage of the indemnity, though so late in claiming it.

Mac Ian hastened from Fort William to Inverary, without even turning aside to his own house, though he passed within a mile of it. But the roads, always very bad, were now rendered almost impassable by a storm of snow; so that, with all the speed the unfortunate chieftain could exert, the fatal 1st of January was past before he reached Inverary.

The Sheriff, however, seeing that Mac Ian had complied with the spirit of the statute, in tendering his submission within the given period, under the sincere, though mistaken belief, that he was applying to the person ordered to receive it; and considering also, that, but for the tempestuous weather, it would after all have been offered in presence of the proper law-officer, did not hesitate to administer the oath of allegiance, and sent off an express to the Privy Council, containing an attestation of Mac Ian's having taken the oaths, and a full explanation of the circumstances which had delayed his doing so until the lapse of the appointed period. The Sheriff also wrote to Colonel Hill what he had done, and requested that he would take care that Glencoe should not be annoyed by any military parties until the pleasure of the Council should be known, which he could not doubt would be favourable.

Mac Ian, therefore, returned to his own house, and resided there, as he supposed, in safety, under the protection of the Government to which he had sworn allegiance. That he might merit this protection, he convoked his clan, acquainted them with his submission, and commanded them to live peaceably, and give no cause of offence, under pain of his displeasure.

In the meantime, the vindictive Secretary of State had procured orders from his sovereign respecting the measures to be followed with such of the chiefs as should not have taken the oaths within the term prescribed. The first of these orders, dated 11th January, contained peremptory directions for military execution, by fire and sword, against all who should not have made their submission within the time appointed. It was, however, provided, in order to avoid driving them to desperation, that there was still to remain a power of granting mercy to those clans who, even after the time was past, should still come in and submit themselves. Such were the terms of the first royal warrant, in which Glencoe was not expressly named.

It seems afterwards to have occurred to Stair, that Glencoe and his tribe would be sheltered under this mitigation of the intended severities, since he had already come in and tendered his allegiance, without waiting for the menace of military force. A second set of instructions were, therefore, made out on the 16th January. These held out the same indulgence to other clans, who should submit themselves at the very last hour (a hypocritical pretext, for there existed none which stood in such a predicament), but they closed the gate of mercy against the devoted Mac Ian, who had already done all that was required of others. The words are remarkable:—"As for Mac Ian of Glencoe, and that tribe, if they can be well distinguished from the rest of the Highlanders, it will be proper, for the vindication of public justice, to extirpate that set of thieves."

You will remark the hypocritical clemency and real cruelty of these instructions, which profess a readiness to extend mercy to those who needed it not (for all the other Highlanders had submitted within the limited time), and deny it to Glencoe, the only man who had not been able literally to comply with the proclamation, though, in all fair construction, he had done what it required.

Under what pretence or colouring King William's authority was obtained for such cruel instructions, it would be in vain to inquire. The Sheriff of Argyle's letter had never been produced before the Council; and the certificate of Mac Ian's having taken the oath was blotted out, and, in the Scottish phrase, deleted from the books of the Privy Council. It seems probable, therefore, that the fact of that chief's submission was altogether concealed from the King, and that he was held out in the light of a desperate and incorrigible leader of banditti, who was the main obstacle to the peace of the Highlands; but if we admit that William acted under such misrepresentations, deep blame will still attach to him for rashly issuing orders of an import so dreadful. It is remarkable that these fatal instructions are both superscribed and subscribed by the King himself, whereas, in most state papers, the sovereign only superscribes, and they are countersigned by the Secretary of State, who is answerable for their tenor; a responsibility which Stair, on that occasion, was not probably ambitious of claiming.

The secretary's letter to the military officers, directing the mode of executing

the King's orders, betray the deep and savage interest which he took personally in their tenor, and his desire that the bloody measure should be as general as possible. He dwelt in these letters upon the proper time and season for cutting off the devoted tribe. "The winter," he said, "is the only season in which the Highlanders cannot elude us, or carry their wives, children, and cattle to the mountains. They cannot escape you; for what human constitution can then endure to be long out of house? This is the proper season to maul them, in the long dark nights." He could not suppress his joy that Glencoe had not come in within the term prescribed; and expresses his hearty wishes that others had followed the same course. He assured the soldiers that their powers should be ample; and he exacted from them proportional exertions. He entreated that the thieving tribe of Glencoe might be *rooted out* in earnest; and he was at pains to explain a phrase which is in itself terribly significant. He gave directions for securing every pass by which the victims could escape, and warned the soldiers that it were better to leave the thing unattempted, than fail to do it to purpose. "To plunder their lands, or drive off their cattle, would" says his letters, "be only to render them desperate; they must be all slaughtered, and the manner of execution must be sure, secret, and effectual."

These instructions, such as have been rarely penned in a Christian country, were sent to Colonel Hill, the Governor of Fort William, who, greatly surprised and grieved at their tenor, endeavoured for some time to evade the execution of them. At length, obliged by his situation to render obedience to the King's commands, he transmitted the orders to Lieutenant Colonel Hamilton, directing him to take four hundred men of a Highland regiment belonging to the Earl of Argyle, and fulfil the royal mandate. Thus, to make what was intended yet worse, if possible, than it was in its whole tenor, the perpetration of this cruelty was committed to soldiers, who were not only the countrymen of the proscribed, but the near neighbours, and some of them the close connexions of the Mac Donalds of Glencoe. This is the more necessary to be remembered because the massacre has unjustly been said to have been committed by English troops. The course of the bloody deed was as follows:

Before the end of January, a party of the Earl of Argyle's regiment, commanded by Captain Campbell of Glenlyon, approached Glencoe. Mac Ian's sons went out to meet them with a body of men, to demand whether they came as friends or foes. The officer replied, that they came as friends, being sent to take up their quarters for a short time in Glencoe, in order to relieve the garrison of Fort William, which was crowded with soldiers. On this they were welcomed with all the hospitality which the chief and his followers had the means of extending to them, and they resided for fifteen days amongst the unsuspecting Mac Donalds, in the exchange of every species of kindness and civility. That the laws of domestic affection might be violated at the same time with those of humanity and hospitality, you are to understand that Alaster Mac Donald, one of the sons of Mac Ian, was married to a niece of Glenlyon, who commanded the party of soldiers. It appears also, that the intended cruelty was to be exercised upon defenceless men; for the Mac Donalds, though afraid of no other ill-treatment from their military guests, had supposed it possible the soldiers might have a commission to disarm them, and therefore had sent their weapons to a distance, where they might be out of reach of seizure.

Glenlyon's party had remained in Glencoe for fourteen or fifteen days, when he received orders from his commanding officer, Major Duncanson, expressed in a manner which shows him to have been the worthy agent of the cruel Secretary. They were sent in conformity with orders of the same date, transmitted to Duncanson by Hamilton, directing that all the Mac Donalds, under seventy years of age, were to be cut off, and that the *Government was not to be troubled with prisoners.* Duncanson's orders to Glenlyon were as follows:—

"You are hereby ordered to fall upon the rebels, and to put all to the sword under seventy. You are to have especial care that the old fox and his cubs do on no account escape your hands; you are to secure all the avenues, that no man escape. This you are to put in execution at four in the morning precisely, *and* by that time, or very shortly after, I will strive to be at you with a stronger *party.* But if I do not come to you at four, you are not to tarry for me, but fall *on.* This is by the King's special command, for the good and safety of the coun-

try, that these miscreants be cut off root and branch. See that this be put into execution without either fear or favour, else you may expect to be treated as not true to the King or Government, nor a man fit to carry a commission in the King's service. Expecting that you will not fail in the fulfilling hereof, as you love yourself, I subscribe these with my hand, "ROBERT DUNCANSON."

This order was dated 12th February, and addressed, "For their Majesties' service to Captain Robert Campbell of Glenlyon."

This letter reached Glenlyon soon after it was written; and he lost no time in carrying the dreadful mandate into execution. In the interval, he did not abstain from any of those acts of familiarity which had lulled asleep the suspicions of his victims. He took his morning draught, as had been his practice every day since he came to the glen, at the house of Alaster Mac Donald, Mac Ian's second son, who was married to his (Glenlyon's) niece. He, and two of his officers named Lindsay, accepted an invitation to dinner from Mac Ian himself, for the following day, on which they had determined he should never see the sun rise. To complete the sum of treachery, Glenlyon played at cards, in his own quarters, with the sons of Mac Ian, John and Alaster, both of whom were also destined for slaughter.

About four o'clock in the morning of 13th February, the scene of blood began. A party, commanded by one of the Lindsays, came to Mac Ian's house and knocked for admittance, which was at once given. Lindsay, one of the expected guests at the family meal of the day, commanded this party, who instantly shot Mac Ian dead by his own bed-side, as he was in the act of dressing himself, and giving orders for refreshments to be provided for his fatal visitors. His aged wife was stripped by the savage soldiery, who, at the same time, drew off the gold rings from her fingers with their teeth. She died the next day, distracted with grief, and the brutal treatment she had received. Several domestics and clansmen were killed at the same place.

The two sons of the aged chieftain had not been altogether so confident as their father respecting the peaceful and friendly purpose of their guests. They observed, on the evening preceding the massacre, that the sentinels were doubled, and the mainguard strengthened. John, the elder brother, had even overheard the soldiers muttering amongst themselves, that they cared not about fighting the men of the glen fairly, but did not like the nature of the service they were engaged in; while others consoled themselves with the military logic, that their officers must be answerable for the orders given, they having no choice save to obey them. Alarmed with what had been thus observed and heard, the young men hastened to Glenlyon's quarters, where they found that officer and his men preparing their arms. On questioning him about these suspicious appearances, Glenlyon accounted for them by a story that he was bound on an expedition against some of Glengarry's men; and alluding to the circumstance of their alliance, which made his own cruelty more detestable, he added, "If anything evil had been intended, would I not have told Alaster and my niece?"

Reassured by this communication, the young men retired to rest, but were speedily awakened by an old domestic, who called on the two brothers to rise and fly for their lives. "Is it time for you," he said, "to be sleeping, when your father is murdered on his own hearth?" Thus roused, they hurried out in great terror, and heard throughout the glen, wherever there was a place of human habitation, the shouts of the murderers, the reports of the muskets, the screams of the wounded, and the groans of the dying. By their perfect knowledge of the scarce accessible, cliffs amongst which they dwelt, they were enabled to escape observation, and fled to the southern access of the glen.

Meantime, the work of death proceeded with as little remorse as Stair himself could have desired. Even the slight mitigation of their orders respecting those above seventy years, was disregarded by the soldiery in their indiscriminate thirst for blood, and several very aged and bedridden persons were slain amongst others. At the hamlet where Glenlyon had his own quarters, nine men, including his landlord, were bound and shot like felons; and one of them, Mac Donald of Auchintriaten, had General Hill's passport in his pocket at the time. A fine lad of twenty had, by some glimpse of compassion on the part of the soldiers, been spared, when one Captain Drummond came up, and demanding why the orders were transgressed in that particular, caused him instantly to be put to death. A boy, of five or six years old, clung to Glenlyon's knees, entreating

for mercy, and offering to become his servant for life, if he would but spare him. Glenlyon was moved; but the same Drummond stabbed the child with his dirk, while he was in this agony of supplication.

At a place called Auchnaion, one Barber, a sergeant, with a party of soldiers, fired on a group of nine Mac Donalds, as they were assembled round their morning fire, and killed four of them. The owner of the house, a brother of the slain Auchintriaten, escaped unhurt, and expressed a wish to be put to death rather in the open air than within the house. "For your bread which I have eaten," answered Barber, "I will grant the request." Mac Donald was dragged to the door accordingly; but he was an active man, and when the soldiers were presenting their firelocks to shoot him, he cast his plaid over their faces, and taking advantage of the confusion, broke from them, and escaped up the glen.

The alarm being now general, many other persons, male and female, attempted their escape in the same manner as the two sons of Mac Ian and the person last mentioned. Flying from their burning huts, and from their murderous visitors, the half-naked fugitives committed themselves to a winter morning of darkness, snow, and storm, amidst a wilderness the most savage in the West Highlands, having a bloody death behind them, and before them tempest, famine, and desolation. Bewildered in the snow-wreaths, several sunk to rise no more. But the severities of the storm were tender mercies compared to the cruelty of their persecutors. The great fall of snow, which proved fatal to several of the fugitives, was the means of saving the remnant that escaped. Major Duncanson, agreeably to the plan expressed in his orders to Glenlyon, had not failed to put himself in motion, with four hundred men on the evening preceding the slaughter; and, had he reached the eastern passes out of Glencoe by four in the morning, as he calculated, he must have intercepted and destroyed all those who took that only way of escape from Glenlyon and his followers. But as this reinforcement arrived so late as eleven in the forenoon, they found no Mac Donald alive in Glencoe, save an old man of eighty, whom they slew; and after burning such houses as were yet unconsumed, they collected the property of the tribe, consisting of twelve hundred head of cattle and horses, besides goats and sheep, and drove them off to the garrison of Fort William.

Thus ended this horrible deed of massacre. The number of persons murdered was thirty-eight; those who escaped might amount to a hundred and fifty males, who, with the women and children of the tribe, had to fly more than twelve miles through rocks and wildernesses ere they could reach any place of safety or shelter.

Note 5. Page 223.

"*Stoutly have I fought*
Upon King James's side; but with Dundee
His cause expired."

"Dundee himself," says Sir Walter Scott, "contrary to the advice of the Highland chiefs, was in the front of the battle, and fatally conspicuous. Observing the stand made by two English regiments, he galloped towards the clan of Mac Donald, and was in the act of bringing them to the charge, with his right arm elevated, as if pointing the way to victory, when he was struck by a bullet beneath the armpit, where he was unprotected by the cuirass. He tried to ride on, but being unable to keep the saddle, fell mortally wounded, and died in the course of that night. Such was the general opinion of his talents and courage, and the general sense of the peculiar crisis at which his death took place, that the common people of the low country cannot even now be persuaded that he died an ordinary death. They say that a servant of his own, shocked at the severities which, if triumphant, his master was likely to accomplish against the Presbyterians, and giving way to the popular prejudice of his having a charm against the effect of leaden balls, shot him in the tumult of the battle with a silver button taken from his livery coat. The Jacobites and Episcopalian party, on the *other* hand, lamented the deceased victor as the last of the Scots, the last of the *Grahams*, and the last of all that was great in his native country."—*Tales of a Grandfather*, chap. 56.

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